



# **The Christian Doctrine Of The Atonement**

**P. P. Waldenstrom**

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# **THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF THE ATONEMENT**

**ACCORDING TO**

**P. P. WALDENSTROM**

**By**

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**Translated from the Swedish by**

**G. F. HEDSTRAND**

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## **FOREWORD**

**BY THE TRANSLATOR**

SIXTY-FIVE years ago the doctrine of redemption and reconciliation became a moot question among the Christian people of Sweden. The revivals had stirred the people and turned their attention to the Bible and its teaching about salvation. Dr. P. P. Waldenstrom, an ordained clergyman of the Swedish state church and professor in Christianity at Gävle college, had come to the conclusion that Christ did not die to change the attitude of God the Father toward sinners, which was the orthodox view of the church, but to change the heart of sinners. In 1872 he declared his conviction in a sermon. From the ranks of the clergy arose a hue and cry of heresy. The sermon was attacked in the pulpits and in the press, but Waldenstrom was a happy warrior and able debator who knew how to defend his position. He answered all criticism by asking

the question: "Where is that written?" In that way he removed the discussion from the realm of theology and compelled his debators to go to the Bible for their statements. The people became interested in the debate and began to read their Bibles to learn what was written about our salvation.

Dr. Waldenstrom expounded the Bible's teaching concerning our salvation in a large work of four volumes, called Guds eviga frälsningsäd (God's Eternal Plan of Salvation). Some years ago Dr. Axel Andersson, president of the Mission Covenant of Sweden, culled from those volumes the gist of Waldenstrom's doctrine concerning the atonement.

I wish to express my gratitude to Dean Nils W. Lund of North Park Seminary and the Rev. J. Howard Hagstrum of North Park College for valuable help in preparing the manuscript, and to Mr. Gerard Johnson for assistance in proof reading.

It is my prayer that the book may lead its readers to a deeper study of the Bible.

G. F. Hedstrand.

Chicago, June 3, 1937.

## **ORIGIN**

DOUBTLESS, it can be shown that Waldenstrom was influenced by various writers in the theological view which forms the basis of his doctrine of the atonement. It cannot be denied, however, that it was primarily through the Bible itself that he was brought to a firm and clear conviction about the atonement. His own statements and his own acknowledgment of the various factors which caused him to come to a decision are so definite that we cannot doubt that he acted in good faith and that he did not wish to violate the strong sense of support which he received from the Word of God. Before we examine his view on the atonement, we would do well to consider briefly how he came to this view.

In the summer of 1870 Waldenstrom conversed with a few clergymen about religious matters. One of the ministers remarked, "How glorious it is that God is reconciled!" Without further deliberation Waldenstrom

replied with the question which afterwards became the slogan of the controversy about the atonement: "Where is that written?" The response of those clergymen present was merely to laugh at the question. Everyone knew quite well that it was written almost everywhere in the Bible.

But when they began to seek specific passages, none could be found.

For Waldenstrom this became a serious matter. In spite of the fact that he searched through the Bible several times he could not find a single text which stated that God was reconciled.

After years of study and thought Waldenstrom expressed his new view in a sermon preached on the twentieth Sunday after Trinity in 1872. His words were carried to all parts of the land through the periodical, *Pietisten*. This sermon became the trumpet blast of the great controversy. The following words may therefore be quoted from this sermon as characteristic of the new view:

"It ought to be self-evident to us that our fall into sin did not change God's attitude to man from love to wrath, because the Bible states everywhere that God is unchangeable. He remains what he is whether man stands or falls. The Scriptures testify to this in definite words. John writes, 'God is love,' not only, 'God loves'; no, in his own eternal unchangeable nature he is love, and he can never cease to be love without ceasing to be God. Similarly, the Lord himself says concerning the foundation for our atonement, 'God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son.' But if he loved the world, the fallen world, so much that he gave his only begotten Son for its salvation, then he loved it in spite of its fall, did he not? And then no change had occurred in his heart because of the fall of man. By this it is evident that the obstacle to man's salvation has never been any wrath against man in the heart of God.

"But man, on the other hand, needed to become reconciled to God in order to be saved; i.e., his sins had to be removed in order that he might not eternally and unavoidably become the object of the wrath of God, which always follows sin. The sacrifice of Jesus was to accomplish this. John writes, 'He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.' we must therefore also guard against the contrary heresy which says that the sacrifice of the Son was only an expression of love on the part of God. The Scriptures teach in definite

words that it was an atoning sacrifice. But notice: it was not God who through this offering was to be appeased; it was man who through the same was to be made righteous--an action which was necessary if he were to be saved. For it was on man's side (in his sin) where the obstacle lay. It was man alone, and not God, who fell from goodness on the day of the Fall. It was man who became God's enemy and turned away from God, and not God who became man's enemy and turned away from man. No, when man went away as God's enemy, then God loved him so much that he in Christ went after him to remove, not God's wrath, but man's sin. When God, therefore, gave his only begotten Son, he did it not in order to find a person on whom he might satisfy his wrath so that he might be able to love the world, but in order to find a person through whom he might save man, the fallen child, whom he unchangeably loved, because he is love.

"Otherwise, Christ would not become our savior but God's savior. Thus our Lord Jesus is not in his suffering our substitute to take away the wrath of God, but God's vicar to take away our sin."

Before the diocese of Härnösand in March, 1873, he again presented and defended his theological view in a dissertation, which stated, among other things, that the divine revelation teaches us:

1. That no change occurred in God's heart because of our fall;
2. That it was therefore no wrath in God's heart which through the fall came in the way of man's salvation;
3. That the change which occurred through the fall was a change in man only, in that he became sinful and fell from God and the life which is in him;
4. That as a result of this fall a reconciliation was necessary for man's salvation; but not a reconciliation which appeased God and presented him as merciful, but one which removed man's sin and presented him righteous again;
5. That this reconciliation has been achieved in Christ Jesus.

The last statement indicates that Waldenstrom had at this time not come to a consistent view concerning the time when man becomes reconciled to God. How he came to this understanding is characteristic of Waldenstrom's entire outlook in this matter. He himself relates it as follows: "In the early part of the winter of 1875, I received a letter from a person who wrote that he had received much good from my writings, but that he had begun to apply to them also the question, 'Where is it written?' He saw plainly that nowhere is it written that God is reconciled to man, but neither could he find it stated that the world is reconciled to God. I wrote to him, 'If you will come here during the Easter holidays I shall show you where that is written.' He came, and for two days I endeavored to show him where it was written. But it was impossible, for all passages I pointed to stated that the purpose of Christ's coming into the world was to reconcile the world, but no passage said that the world is now reconciled to God. It was written nowhere; and thus, as one prop after another fell down, the man was compelled to return home without any answer to his question. I was worried; I thought: 'Dear God and Father, is not even that written in the Bible?' And I examined the Scriptures and found that it was not written. What was I to do? Was I to say, 'Because I have been teaching this until now, I shall continue to teach it although it is not written in the Bible?'"

## THE LOVE OF GOD

IN his great work *Guds eviga frälsningsåd* (God's Eternal Plan of Salvation) Waldenstrom starts out by setting forth Christ as the center of the Bible and the world. He is God's only begotten Son, who "was with the Father in glory before the world was made." He possessed not merely part of the fulness of God, but "all the fulness of the Godhead."

But at the same time that Christ is God's only begotten Son, begotten by the Father, he is also the Son of man, a true and real man, just like one of us. God has become revealed in flesh.

The incarnation of the Son depends on God. He has given him as a savior of the world.



If we ask why God gave his only begotten Son, we must look for the answer in the love of God. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son to save it. If we ask why God loves the world, the answer is: because he is love. Just as truthfulness must speak truth and righteousness do justice, so love cannot but love. "To speak of love which can refrain from loving, is just as absurd as to talk of a righteousness which can refrain from being just." For the same reason that righteousness does justice because it is right to do it, so "love does not love for any other reason than that it is love." And "it always loves without respect to the worthiness of those it loves." Therefore, God loves sinners. If God ceased to love, he would become something else than what he is; for he is love. But God is unchangeable; his love must therefore continue.

When we believe that God's love for us has ceased because of our sin, we inadvertently adopt a pagan conception of God arising from our own nature which causes our love to cease when anyone sins against us. But with God it is not so. He is love, and he cannot cease to love. "God is love itself," says Waldenstrom, quoting Luther, "and God's nature is pure love. If anyone desires to paint a true picture of God, he must picture him as pure love."

For that reason God loves, not only those who are worthy and good, but also those who are inimical and sinful. This is shown in the Gospel of Luke where the love of God toward sinners is so strongly emphasized that everything else recedes into the background. In this context Waldenstrom refers to a man, who, when he first heard that God loves ungodly with the same divine love he bestows on believers, was frightened by the new and dangerous heresy which every Christian ought to resist.

It happened that later two of his three daughters were converted. He told of their conversion to a brother in Christ, who said, "What a grace of God. But listen! Am I right in supposing that you do not love the unconverted daughter as much as the other two?" Amazed, the father exclaimed, "Why, certainly I do. The two who are Christians I do not worry about, but the one who persists in unbelief I can never forget; she lies heavy on my heart both day and night." His friend replied, "Then you must be better than God, if it is true that God cannot love the ungodly with the same cordial and divine love as he loves the believers." How peculiar! This man himself possessed a spark of the divine love which he said was not

found in God. That he himself loved his wayward daughter he did not consider heretical, but that God, the majestic God, should love in a similar manner appeared to him as a terrible heresy. And yet, it was from no other source than God's own heart that he himself had received that spark of love by which he loved his own daughter who persisted in unbelief.

Opposition to this view of God's love is met by Waldenstrom with the statement that it is not for us to judge God's love by the standard of our own [sinful nature] but by the word of God. God shows us his love by Christ's death for us while we are yet God's enemies. He is good to those who are ungrateful and evil, and he lets the rain fall on both the righteous and unrighteous. If a person loves his friends only, he is no better than publicans and sinners. "If a person is to love according to God's way of loving, he must love the enemies who hate and persecute him."

God has likened himself to a father. As such he is "constrained by the love in his heart to seek and save the lost. The salvation of the lost is the only reward he asks for his sacrifice." On the other hand, he himself rewards all who assist him in seeking those who are lost. As to himself, he is fully rewarded when the lost child is found.

Let no one say that God may be as good as a father but is not as loving as a mother, whose love is more persistent. God himself says that even if a mother should forsake her child, he will not forsake fallen man. "A father is good, but even he may faint; when he gives up, a mother often persists in her love. But even she may faint, and when she fails God still persists in his love."

To anyone who would insist that the love of God makes Christ unnecessary, Waldenstrom replies that it is not against God we need help but against the enemies to whom God does not belong. The serpent of brass was not a help against God, but a help sent by God against the plague of the snakes. If Pharisees and their brethren are irritated by this fact and see with evil eyes that God is good, that does not change the fact. "God loves sinners and is good, not only to the extent it pleases men, but even so far that it irritates them."

# THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE LOVE OF GOD AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS

THE holiness and righteousness of God, instead of conflicting with his love, are in perfect harmony with it. There is nothing "so holy and righteous as love . . . That which above all characterizes the saints from the world is love; i.e., love which includes enemies as well as friends. Love is the perfection of law, says Paul; since the perfection of law is righteousness, love is righteousness . . . That righteousness and love should be opposed to each other is so far from being true that the opposite is actually true, namely, that no one can be righteous without loving. As long as God is God, he remains righteous; and as long as he remains righteous, he must love, for it is unrighteous not to love, but unrighteousness is not found in God."

Neither is the righteousness of God set forth in the Scriptures as something terrifying but as something comforting and pleasant. David anticipates salvation through God's righteousness. John says that if we confess our sins, God is just and righteous and forgives our sins and cleanses us from all unrighteousness. Similarly, we see righteous men help those who are in sin and misery.

The doctrine about God's righteousness agrees perfectly with what the Bible teaches about the wrath of God and punishment; for God's wrath is directed against sin as such, and not against the sinner. "At the same time that God loves sinners and does good to them, he hates all sin and unrighteousness." He who believes that Jesus hates sin less than God hates it, does not know Jesus truly. In his relation to sin Jesus is also "the true and perfect image of God. No one has hated sin as he, no one has loved the sinner as he, and no one has therefore done such deeds as he to save sinners from sin." In a similar manner they who live in Christ and are made righteous through faith in him hate all sin but are merciful and willing to help all sinners.

Even in everyday life we differentiate between the sinner and his sin. When, for example, "a prohibitionist loves drunkards, it does not mean that he loves drunkenness, and when he hates drunkenness, it does not mean that he hates the drunkard." The contrary is true. He differentiates

definitely between the one and the other. "If the drunkard and drunkenness were identical, the drunkard could never be saved from drunkenness." This is true "in regard to all sins: The possibility of a sinner's salvation depends on just this, that there is a distinct difference between sin and the sinner. Had God not hated sin in such a holy and consuming manner, he would not have made such a great sacrifice for the salvation of sinners."

God is righteous in the same manner as Christ. They take a similar attitude both to sin and the sinner. "What the Father loves, the Son loves; what the Father hates and condemns, the Son hates and condemns; what causes the Father to be angry, causes the Son to be angry; what the Father rejects, the Son rejects. Just as there is no righteousness in the Son that contradicts his love or which demands exoneration or restitution in order to permit him to show mercy, so is there no such righteousness in the Father. Otherwise the righteousness of the Son would not be similar to that of the Father, and then it would not be true that the Father and Son are one. Just as certain as there does not exist in the Son a righteousness which hates sin less than the Father hates it, neither is it the will of the Son nor the purpose of his work to save us from the wrath of the Father. Because where the Father is angry and condemns, there the Son also is angry and condemns in exactly the same manner."

## **THE BLOOD OF JESUS**

IN agreement with Old Testament conditions, the New Testament often speaks of the blood of Jesus. Just as almost everything is purified in blood, according to the law of Moses, the New Testament says that cleansing from sin "is not by the death of Jesus but by the blood of Jesus."

Waldenstrom begins his treatise on this subject with a eulogy on the saving power of the blood of Jesus. "The blood of Jesus--oh, wonderful word," he writes. "Just think of the many thousands who have found life and peace through the blood of Jesus. All those who have been restored

and redeemed from their sins--how have they been redeemed? The answer is: by the blood of Jesus. When a person who for many years with great anxiety has sought in vain by his own deeds to become righteous--when such a person at once becomes free, happy and blessed, by what wonderful means is that accomplished? The answer is, Only by the blood of Jesus. What is it that year after year keeps the Christians alive? What is it that purifies, sanctifies, strengthens them and makes them victorious over sin, the world, death, the devil, and all evil things? The answer is, The blood of Jesus. And the throng of those yonder, that stand before the throne of the Lamb in eternal glory, how did they come there? What was it that made them pure and worthy to stand there? The answer is, The blood of Jesus. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, says the Bible."

Similar exultations have often been uttered in the course of gospel messages. We hear them often in our days, too. But not all know the meaning of their words. Such speech often becomes meaningless or ambiguous.

Waldenstrom wants the enthusiasm and joy of a Christian to rest on a sure foundation. He wants to know what the New Testament means when it speaks of the blood of Jesus, and he praises it because he knows how precious it is. "What do the Scriptures mean," he asks, "when they speak of the blood of Jesus as means of salvation for sinners.? It must be self-evident that they do not mean the physical blood of Christ. When, for instance, we read that the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sins, or that the saints have washed their robes and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb, or that the blood of Christ purifies our consciences from dead deeds to serve the living God, etc., it cannot be possible for anyone to think that it means to wash our clothes or our conscience in the physical blood of Christ. Everyone must know that the blood is a symbol of something. When the Lord says, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have not life in yourselves, (John 6: 53), surely no sensible person thinks that his physical blood is in a cup for us to drink. No, everyone understands that blood in this instance is a symbol of something. What is it, then, that the blood symbolizes?"

Waldenstrom seeks to answer these questions by examining the Bible passages which speak of the blood of Jesus. As usual, he attempts first to remove some misconceptions; he then proceeds to a more positive

statement of the doctrine.

"When men sometime have held," he writes, "that to be cleansed through the blood of Christ, to wash one's robes white in the blood,' is the same as to believe that the blood of Christ has a perfect value before God as payment for man's debt of sin, they have held a conception that does not agree with the Scriptures. For the Scriptures say 'the blood,' but never 'faith in the blood.' Notice: not faith in the blood but the blood itself is that which cleanses from sin; not faith in the blood but the blood itself purifies the conscience from dead deeds to serve the living God, etc. Neither does the Bible say that it is the value of the blood before God which cleanses from sin; no, but it is the blood itself, and it is important that we pay attention to this mode of expression. Neither does the Bible say a word about the view that the blood of Christ should be a payment to God for our guilt of sin.

"Neither is the blood of the sacrifice in the Old Testament ever said to be such a payment. But what, then, does the blood mean? It is quite the usual thing for Christians to hear, speak, and sing about 'the blood of Jesus' without making it clear to themselves what this expression means. But this cannot be right, nor can they be truly edified by it. The real edification which an expression gives always depends on the meaning attached to it; and to speak of blessing from an expression which one does not understand is the same as to speak of edification from a sermon in a foreign tongue which one does not understand."

"What is the meaning of the expression, the blood of Jesus? Blood and life are closely connected. This had been stated previously in the Old Testament. In Leviticus 17:11 we read, 'The life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh atonement by reason of the life.' And again in verse 14, 'For as to the life of all flesh, the blood thereof is all one with the life thereof.' For this reason the Israelites were forbidden to eat blood. By these references we understand that blood is an expression which means life, and this understanding immediately sheds a beautiful, heavenly light on the words of the Scriptures about the blood of Jesus."

"It is very common in the Bible for blood to stand as an expression for life," writes Waldenstrom. "A few examples will prove this. When

Jonathan declared to his father that David was innocent, he said: 'Wherefore then wilt thou sin against innocent blood, to slay David without a cause?' (I Sam. 19:5). To sin against innocent blood is in this passage identical with taking an innocent man's life. In Psalm 94:21 David says, 'They ... condemn the innocent blood,' i.e., they condemn the righteous to death. In Ezek. 3:18 the Lord says to the prophet: 'When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thy hand.' Here again blood is the same as life. Yes, this mode of speech is used everywhere in the Old Testament.

"Also in the New Testament we find the same expression. In Matt. 27:24 Pilate says of Jesus, 'I am innocent of the blood of this righteous man,' i.e., I declare myself not guilty of his death. And the people answered, 'His blood be on us, and on our children,' i.e., we are willing to accept the responsibility for taking his life. Similarly, the Lord says: 'That the blood of all prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may he required of this generation' (Luke 11: 50). When Judas saw that Jesus had been captured, he repented of his betrayal and brought back the money, saying, 'I have sinned in that I betrayed innocent blood' (Matt. 27: 4), i.e., an innocent life. All such passages tell us that it is a very common thing for the Scriptures to say blood instead of life; this is specially true when it concerns a life sacrificed in death, as we see by the above-mentioned passages. This truth is made clear when it is said in Matt. 20:28 and Mark 10:45 that the Son of man has come to give his life a ransom for many, while in Ephesians 1:7 and I Peter 1:18 it is stated that we have redemption through his blood. In the one place we read of his life, in the other of his blood, as ransom or means of redemption. The one means exactly the same as the other. The blood of Jesus means nothing else than his life which was sacrificed in death."

Waldenstrom continues to examine all the Bible passages which speak of the blood of Jesus. We cannot quote him at length, but we refer our readers to his book, *Guds eviga frälsningsåd* ("God's Eternal Plan of Salvation") for a thorough examination of these passages. We quote only a few fragmentary passages; these, however, give a fairly clear conception of his view.

First he quotes a word by Jesus himself. "In Matt. 26:28 the Lord says as

he gives the disciples the blessed cup, 'This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many unto remission of sin.' In, with, and under the wine Jesus gave them his blood, made them partakers of his life, which he was now ready to sacrifice for them. When he gave them the bread, he did not say, This symbolizes my body. He said, This is my body. And when he gave them the wine he did not say, This symbolizes my blood. He said, This is my blood. Thus, when he gave them the bread and wine he made them actual partakers of himself, joined them with himself as limbs of his body, and made them partakers of his life. Of this Paul speaks in words which are clear and specific in I Cor. 10:16: The cup o[ blessing which we bless, is it not a communion of the blood o[ Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a communion of the body of Christ? By the bread and wine we are made actual partakers of the flesh and blood of Christ; i.e., we become one body with him and partakers of his life. Because of this, Paul says in the same passage: "Seeing that we, who are many, are one bread, one body: for we all partake of the one bread.' This act of participation is so real and serious that anyone who shall eat the bread or drink the cup in an unworthy manner shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord and subject himself to judgment (I Cor. 11:27). Oh, that we might comprehend what great and divine things happen in the Lord's supper! Reason cries, 'Here are only bread and wine,' but Paul says, 'Here is participation in Christ's life which he sacrificed for us; here is the believers' assimilation into one body through participation of the body of Christ.' May God give us a simple faith!

"But when the Lord says, My blood which is poured out for many unto remission of sins, he states that the purpose of the sacrifice of his life was that the disciples should receive the forgiveness of sins and be redeemed from sin. As we have said many times, we say again: Everything that Jesus did, from incarnation to his death, had in view the forgiveness of sins and the redemption from sin. But when he does not say that his blood was poured out for the forgiveness of all but for many, he means to say that although he has tasted death for all, his blood will not become the means of forgiveness or salvation for all, but for many, namely, for those only who through faith are made partakers of his sacrificial life. All thoughts of forgiveness for sin while a person is still living in sin, apart from Jesus, are only imaginations by which the devil deceives the souls. To partake of the Lord's supper in order to receive the forgiveness of sin, while a person refuses to open his heart for



participation of the sacrificial life of the Lord Jesus, is not a pious and godly act; it is ungodliness and iniquity before God."

Paul speaks in several places about the blood of Jesus. In Rom. 3:25 he says: "Whom God set forth to be a propitiation [a mercy seat], through faith, in his blood." On this verse Waldenstrom comments as follows: "God has made him to be a mercy seat through his sacrificial death. Notice that it is in that manner that Christ has become the mercy seat to which the Bible refers all who desire to receive grace and mercy. And it is done by God. Contrary to the doctrine that Christ by his blood is a defense for sinners against God and his righteousness, God himself has set him forth as a mercy seat for sinners in order to save and bless them in him. The phrase is set forth, not hid behind some veil, as the Old Testament mercy seat. Here it is set forth before the whole world as a refuge for all sinners who seek salvation. And he is set forth as a mercy seat through faith in his blood, i.e., through faith sinners partake of the blood of Jesus or of his sacrificed life. This is the true grace of salvation, because by this grace sinners are truly saved. The life that man originally had was of God, and the life by which man is again made living after he has fallen in sin is of God. It is the life poured out by the Son of God which through faith in him becomes man's life. O, what grace! God himself, through the death of his Son, gives his own life to those who are dead in sin in order that they may live."

Commenting on Rom. 5:9 Waldenstrom says: "In the Bible it is never a question of coming by faith into possession of the atonement, or grace, or righteousness which has been secured for us by the blood of Jesus; not a single statement to that effect can be found in the Bible. It is everywhere a question of partaking of the blood itself through faith, partaking of Christ's precious blood, or his life poured out in death. In that way we are saved. Because of this, the blood is never spoken of as a payment to God to reconcile him, to make him gracious; no, it is always spoken of as given by God for our reconciliation to him that we might have life. Oh, what a God! When it would have been right for him to demand our blood, he gave blood, the blood of his only begotten Son. Such a God can be called a true God, a God who helps. Listen, does not your heart beat for joy when you think of it? Such are not the gods of the heathens."

Waldenstrom's comments on Col. 1:19 ff. are similar to the above: "Thus

the blood of the cross of Christ, i.e., the life sacrificed on the cross, is the means whereby peace is secured; but the sinner's participation in this life is the manner by which peace is secured through the blood. It has pleased God to use this way and method until peace fills the earth as water fills the ocean and the disorder which man's fall caused in the world is completely set right. According to our idea, it moves very slowly, but it moves surely, toward that goal. The blood of Jesus shall conquer until all knees shall bow in his name and acknowledge him as Lord, to the glory of God the Father. God's eternal plan of salvation is brought nearer its completion each time peace is made between a sinner and God through the blood of Jesus."

The epistle to the Hebrews contains several passages about the blood of Jesus, and Waldenstrom gives special attention to these passages. "There is nothing in the Scriptures," he writes, "which comes closer to our life than the talk about the blood of Jesus, because it deals with the believers' life in Jesus and his life in them . . . The blood of Jesus is no admission fee which God has accepted to let sinners into heaven; it is the means he himself has given to sinners to cleanse them from sin." Neither is it written "that the blood of Jesus because of its worthiness shall be accepted by God in place of holiness. No, but it shall sanctify us. Neither is it written that the blood through its worthiness shall induce God to consider us holy although we are not. No! Of what help would it be to a sick person if someone induced the physician to consider him well although he was still sick? God sees everything as it is, and nothing can affect his eyes so as to induce him to regard it otherwise. Neither would it be of any blessing to us if God would behold us as clean although we are unclean. Nor was the blood of Jesus given for that purpose. It was to accomplish greater things than that. It was not shed for the purpose of inducing God to let the unclean stand for the clean; but to make the unclean clean, to sanctify the people, truly to restore God's people to the Lord, its God, holy and clean--this is the purpose and work of the blood. But how does the blood accomplish all that? The answer is, 'Through the life, which is in it' (Lev. 17:11); i.e., sanctification is accomplished in that Christ's own life, which was poured out in the blood, is given the sinner through faith."

It is said in I Peter 1: 18,19 that the believers have been redeemed with the blood of Christ. Waldenstrom says of this passage: "Only through the

blood of Christ had it been done, i.e., through his life which was sacrificed in death for them; for the life is in the blood, and the blood saves through the life which is in it. for this reason the Lord says that he has given his life a ransom for many. But in what manner had they, through the blood of Jesus, been saved from their former sinful life? How had it been achieved? Answer: Only in this manner that they through faith had been sprinkled in their heart with the blood, i.e., made partakers of the life which was in the blood."

Christ has not "redeemed the believers by giving God his blood as a ransom for their sins in order that he might release them." For "God never kept man captive in sin. On the contrary, it was God who wanted to make man free and gave his Son for that purpose." The blood is the means, and they are saved because they are in the blood. "But to be in the blood of Jesus means to be so intimately grafted into Jesus through faith that we partake of his life." They who have come through the great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 7:11) have not washed their robes in any physical blood. Neither have they been dressed in someone else's white robes. "They have washed their own unclean robes, i.e., they themselves had been made clean and were now free from all sin, holy and righteous. Otherwise, they would not have been in heaven where nothing defiled enters, nothing which works abomination and a lie (Rev. 21: 27).

"But how had they become clean? The answer is, By washing themselves in the blood of the Lamb. Now, then, had they washed themselves? Answer: Only through faith in Christ. But how had they become clean through faith? Answer: Through faith they had been grafted into Christ, as the branch is grafted into the tree. As the sap of the tree flows into the branch that is grafted into it and makes it partaker of the life of the tree, so the blood of the Lamb has, as it were, circulated through the believers; i.e., they have been made partakers through faith of Christ's life which for them was sacrificed in death. And this had purified their heart (Acts 15:9) and their life (Titus 2:14). For this reason they stood before the throne pure, holy, blessed. And for us, for you and me, the way is the same to the same place. The blood of Jesus--the blood of Jesus makes us partakers of the life of Jesus through faith; this is the mystery of salvation... That Christ has given his life in death for sinners is the fundamental reason for all salvation and all victory over sin,

death, and the devil. Without this all of us would be lost, eternally and unavoidably. But when the sinner is made partaker of Christ's sacrificed life, he conquers. Then all the gates of hell cannot overcome him. Then the most dreadful fetters of sin are broken by which the devil has kept him a prisoner, and he goes out from the prison free and happy, righteous and blessed."

In conclusion Waldenstrom says: "All passages in the New Testament in which the expression, 'the blood of Jesus,' appears deal with one and the same great divine mystery, namely, our salvation from sin, death, and everything evil through participation of the life of Christ, the Son of God. God gave his Son for our salvation--this is the beginning. The Son gave his life in the blood--this is the continuation. Through faith we get this life and are saved, purified, sanctified in it from all evil until we stand before his throne, partaking with all the blessed in the song of praise--this is the conclusion, the perfection."

## **REDEMPTION**

SALVATION is of God. Both the Old and the New Testament assert this. "Innumerable are the testimonies of the Scriptures about the fact that the Lord our God is a Savior, and a Savior not only from physical evil but from sin, death, the devil, and everything which can destroy us." As God during the Old Testament time at different occasions saved his people "through servants, or means which were suitable and serviceable," so he also sends men a Savior to save them from their sins. "For this reason Paul says that God, our Savior, saved us through Jesus, our Savior. God is the Savior, because it is in him and in his grace that salvation with all its accompanying blessings has its foundation. It originates in him; Jesus is Savior because he is the person through whom God saves the lost. The Father is in the Son and performs the deeds which we see the Son do." Consequently, Jesus says: "he that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me" (John 12:44). Salvation is therefore of God through Jesus Christ.

Most people, however, do not believe that it is God's work to save

sinners. "Ever since the fall man's heart has been darkened, so that we do not know God but flee from him as if he were not a redeemer but a destroyer. Adam and Eve hid themselves from him behind the bushes in Eden, the Catholics hide themselves behind Virgin Mary and other saints; yea, many thousand Lutherans know of no other difference between themselves and the Catholics than that they in Christ have a better protection against God than the Catholics have in Virgin Mary. To flee, escape, and hide one's self from God is the natural tendency of the heart, and the problem is to find a safe place where one may hide in order not to be destroyed by God." But this is contrary to the picture of God which the Bible gives us. "If it is true that the Father and Son are one, then the one receives sinners with the same tender heart as the other, and the sinners need no more flee and seek protection from the one than from the other. Sinners are not lost in accordance with God's will but against his will, because they neglect his salvation to their own destruction. The apostle says that God does not desire the death of any sinner. It must, therefore, be evident that when the sinner dies and is lost, it is contrary to the will of God. It is God's will that no sinners shall die. Death is not something which comes from God, but an enemy that God is fighting, the last enemy, indeed, whose defeat shall mark the final completion of Christ's work of salvation."

"The Lord does not save merely by forgiving sin, but also by restoring, sanctifying, and purifying the sinner." Where there is forgiveness of sin, there is also a new spiritual life, which expresses itself in a new way of living. The former life in sin is "the old man," and the life born of the Spirit is "the new man." The Christians have put off the old man, have taken on the new man, and are now in progress of being renewed in their spirit. The Christians receive a new heart and a new spirit. But even a Christian retains "the flesh," by which is meant the old [Adamic nature,] which is still there as a power of temptation for the Christians. Before, while the believer "lived in unbelief, he often felt the tugging of the Spirit, but he did not yield, but continued to walk after the flesh. Now, when he lives in the Spirit, he feels the pulling of the flesh, but he does not yield to it but continues to walk after the spirit."

"The Bible often speaks of salvation from something evil as 'redemption' or 'ransom.' The evil from which one is saved is then likened to a prison from which the prisoner is bailed out." But we must not make the

common error of considering this an actual business transaction with buyer and seller, a sum paid and accepted. Christ has not given his life as a ransom either to the devil, as the ancients thought, or to God, as modern theologians think. "Always, when it is a question of redemption, it concerns our redemption to God. Redemption is another word for salvation. Just as the word 'salvation' means our salvation, the Bible means our redemption when it speaks generally of redemption." Just as slavery under something evil is spoken of as being sold to evil, the liberation from something evil is likened to a purchase of freedom. When Paul (I Tim. 2: 6) says that Jesus has given himself a ransom for many, "ransom" means something which one gives out in order to gain something else. The fact that Jesus has died for the redemption of sinners shows that he values our salvation more than his own life. "It is God's will that all men shall be saved, Christ is sent to save all men, and that person is saved (or redeemed) who through Christ has been set free from sin--the others are still imprisoned, condemned, sold to sin, etc.; it is in this simple way that the Bible speaks." Nowhere in the Bible do we find such an expression as "the whole world is redeemed."

"Redemption consists partly in the forgiveness of sin and partly in the release or redemption of the sinner from sin, world, death, devil, and everything evil. redemption includes the whole salvation of man--all the way from the time when the Lord receives man where he lies dead in sin until he, redeemed from everything evil in body and soul, stands before God's throne as holy, righteous and blessed as God himself."

Redemption includes first of all the forgiveness of sin, which "consists in God's forgiving the sinner all his guilt and dealing with him as though he had never sinned." The guilt (debt) is not paid; it is forgiven, as is shown in the only two passages in the New Testament (Matt. 18:27,32, and Luke 7:42) where the guilt of sin is likened unto a debt of money. "The sin which is forgiven is nowhere to be found; it has disappeared as the disease has vanished when one has been healed."

The forgiveness is spoken of as an act of redemption or ransom from sin, because by it the sinner is "taken out and redeemed from his old sins." Man is not forgiven because of any "worthy cause or merit" on his part, but on account of God's mercy. "If sinners feel more at ease with their conscience when they believe that their sins are paid for, it is because they do not know the true character of God but compare him with

themselves." It is stated nowhere in the Bible that God forgives for money. On the contrary, "nothing can be more unbiblical than the doctrine of payment for the guilt of sin. That doctrine means in the last analysis that through some kind of payment sin may cease to be moral guilt, and it is terrible to think of any such possibility. If that doctrine were true, then God forgave sin on credit in the Old Testament; this is a conception of God's righteousness which is insulting to God--not to mention the fact that it is entirely unknown both in the Old and the New Testaments." God's righteousness could not demand payment in order to forgive, because it is more righteous to forgive for nothing than for money. "Even sinners and pagans can forgive for money." But "when the Lord wants to teach us how to act in a holy manner as children of God, he teaches us to forgive without receiving previous satisfaction." God forgives our sins for his own sake (Isa. 43: 25). He is so constituted that he must love, help and forgive.

That is also exemplified by Jesus. "When the Lord Christ in the days of his flesh sought, helped and showed mercy to all kinds of publicans and sinners, when he assured them of the forgiveness of sin, associated with them, ate with them, etc., the Pharisees thought he could not be a holy and righteous person. Their own holiness was of such a nature--a spurious holiness. But Christ showed that the right kind of holiness and righteousness consists in seeking and saving that which is lost, to do this always, and to do it freely. Because he was his Father's image he did this and could not refrain from doing it even if it caused him to be persecuted and finally crucified. He did it for the Father's sake of whom he had received that spirit and calling. And the Father does it for his own sake--after the riches of his grace."

God is gracious neither for the sake of Virgin Mary nor for Jesus' sake, but for his own sake. "No one can look at us with eyes so kind and benign as God; no father can seek his erring son with more tenderheartedness than God seeks sinners; no mother can be more happy when she sees her lost child returning than God when he sees a sinner coming back to him. No father or mother can be more willing to blot out, forgive and forget the sins of an erring son or daughter than God is to forgive the sins of all who like the prodigal son return home. The more righteous a person is, the more merciful he is. Mercy is an expression of righteousness. When the mercy of a father comes to an

end, that of the mother will endure; and when a mother's mercy ceases, the mercy of God persists. When a candle has burned down, the sun still shines with the same brilliancy and glory. God is so righteous that he forgives sin."

In this connection Waldenstrom refers to one of his earlier books, well known among his contemporaries, namely, *Herren är from* (The Lord Is Gracious). That book is an exposition of the 25th Psalm and deals especially with the matter of the atonement in the exposition of the eighth verse: "Good and upright is the Lord: therefore will he instruct sinners in the way." The treatment of the text is rather polemical, but it gives us a vivid picture of the author's line of thought. In a quotation from Luther the words "righteous" and "righteousness" are said to mean really "good" and "gracious." And Waldenstrom adds among other things: "As soon as we hear that God is righteous we begin to fear and think only of punishment and judgment. Who would think that it might mean that God is good? Especially if we have fallen in some sin and really need a gracious God--especially then do we fear God's righteousness, and then nothing seems more preposterous than to say that God's righteousness consists just in this that he is a gracious God. No, when we look for help against his righteousness, in order that we may not be destroyed by it, many go so far as to take Christ himself and his blood as a shield against the righteousness of God. So completely have we been darkened by the fall. And it is out of this darkness that the theologians have developed the doctrine that there is a contradiction between God's love and God's righteousness. This contradiction they have read into the Word of God, pretending that it is implied in the Scriptures, although it is written nowhere. In that way they have caused people to misunderstand the Word of God: they have even beguiled many holy, faithful, and godly teachers from the truth, because this doctrine agrees so perfectly with man's natural conception of God. For we are so saturated with these false conceptions of God that thousands of Christians imagine that they see it written everywhere in the Bible although they cannot point to a single passage. In addition, there are many who know that this doctrine is not found in the Bible and yet do not dare to abandon it. May God open our eyes! For the loving heavenly Father is eager to be known by his children, and it must doubtless hurt him that we use as a shield against himself the help he in his great mercy has given us in order that we might be raised from sin and death and be able again to come home to him in



righteousness.

"But, you say, does not the Bible teach as follows: Because of his love God wanted to bless fallen humanity, but because of his righteousness he could not do it. His righteousness was offended by sin, and he could not yield in his demand for punishment. But love found a way when the only begotten Son was sacrificed in order that God's righteousness might be satisfied and our guilt of sin be paid in full, et cetera. To this we answer, Nowhere in the Bible is that written. And if it is not written in the Bible, you should consider it only as the teaching of men. Indeed, even if you find that many godly teachers have taught that doctrine you should abandon it, believing God's Word more than the reputation of men. And if, by doing this, you are accused of being stubbornly self-reliant, know that it is more humble to bow before God's Word than to be a slave under the teachings of men. Godly teachers have never desired their words to be considered against the Word of God if they in anything should be found to have misunderstood the Bible. As Luther says, 'The holy fathers were men. Who will now vouchsafe that they taught the truth? Who would want to depend on their words and die on what they taught contrary to the Bible? Here are saints and there are saints! No, I shall not trust anyone, even all the angles and saints, who does not show me the testimony of the Word of God.'

"Be not slaves of men, says Paul, for ye are bought with a price. And may the Lord give us grace to abandon everything that men teach contrary to the Word of God! If a man sin against me and in that way becomes guilty before me, I do not believe that righteousness demands that I shall insist on full restitution for myself. And if I should insist on full restitution, no one would praise my righteousness--least of all would God do it. If, on the other hand, I do not insist on recompense but forgive freely, yea, even sacrifice the best I have to help and save the guilty, then people may begin to call me righteous. This is the correct conception of being righteous. And in that manner God showed his righteousness when he beheld us guilty. he did not demand satisfaction for himself. Quite the contrary! He gave, he sacrificed all, his only begotten Son; not for himself, but for us; not to receive payment for our debt, but to take away our sin, destroy our debt and break down the wall, sin, which stood between us and him and which made it impossible for us to return to the former happy fellowship with him. Demand, collect everything to the last

farthing--that is not the righteousness of our God: no, give out, give out everything, even an only begotten Son, that is the righteousness of God. Demand--even the goods of the heathens can be righteous to that extent; but give out everything, even an only begotten Son, for the salvation of the guilty--only our dear God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is so righteous.

"See to it, therefore, that you do not get a wrong conception of the righteousness of God, but know that the highest righteousness which is found in God is the fact that he loves sinners, has mercy, and withholds nothing pertaining to their salvation; this is also exemplified in the only begotten Son, of whom the prophet sings, 'Behold, thy King cometh unto thee; he is just, and having salvation.' Know also that in the Father is no other righteousness than what you find in the Son, as the Lord says: he that hath seen me hath seen the Father. And in the Son you see a righteousness which goes about doing good and healing all that are oppressed by the devil, seeking that which is lost and bringing back that which has gone astray, forgiving sin, preaching the gospel, and finally giving its life for sinners. Therefore, if anyone shall tell you that love and righteousness contradict one another, know that such teaching is of men. Because, as we said, to love an enemy is the highest righteousness which is found in heaven or on earth. Indeed, the perfect unity of righteousness and love is seen in the fact that the Law, which is an expression of God's righteousness and therefore demands a righteousness like God's righteousness, demands just this: Thou shalt love, love thine enemies, love them as thyself.

"God grant that we might understand this! For it causes untold harm that theologians by their speculations have so completely distorted the true picture of God's righteousness that they have misled even many earnest Christians and teachers to believe their doctrine in opposition to the Word of God. Indeed, the doctrine about God's righteousness has come to this, that if an earthly father should practice such righteousness as is ascribed to God, all people would condemn him as an unnatural father, and no one would praise him as righteous. Even the children of God are so weaned from the right conception of God's righteousness that they are amazed when anyone tells them that God's righteousness is similar to the righteousness which he in the Law demands of us, namely, that he loves his enemies, blesses them that curse him, is kind to them that persecute

him, is good to the ungrateful and the evil ones, etc. But as we have often said: Even if it seems venturesome, discard, nevertheless, the speculations of men and bestir yourself to learn in childlike faith what the Word of God teaches about God's righteousness. And when you hear about the satisfying of God's righteousness, know that it means the satisfaction which any righteous father seeks--and above all the satisfaction our heavenly Father seeks--which does not mean a demand for restitution to the uttermost for the transgressions of the erring children, but a desire to wipe out their guilt by the supreme sacrifice and bring them as righteous people to his own home, to his broken Father's heart.

"By this you shall learn also to judge rightly the objection which often is raised when one tells sinners of God's infinite love. They say: 'But God's love is a holy and righteous love.' By speaking thus they use God's righteousness as a wall which encloses his love and shuts out poor sinners, hindering them from believing in God's love and thus from being happy. However, consider the matter in childlike faith, as we have said already, and be assured that love proves itself righteous, not by demanding and repelling, but by yielding everything, yes, by giving itself and everything it has for the salvation of those who have sinned. When the father of the prodigal son did not stay home but ran toward the son and embraced him and kissed him--then love proved itself righteous. If, indeed, you desire to see how love proves itself righteous, then behold the Lord Jesus as he sits on Mount Olivet and weeps over Jerusalem, or as he prays on the cross for his enemies, saying, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. Verily, here you see God's righteousness in its greatest glory. Therefore, when you hear that God's love is a righteous love, remember this and comfort yourself with it, knowing that it means that God's love is a love which is ready to sacrifice everything for the salvation of sinners, that it has an open door, open arms, and an open heart for all sinners who wish to come; yea, it is a love which even goes out and seeks the sinners and weeps for those who are contrary and evil-minded that they also might repent and live. To do these things for sinners is to be righteous."

Waldenstrom disposes of the satisfaction theory of the atonement as an unbiblical doctrine. "The theory taught by theologians that God by the blood of Christ received full payment for all our sins and that because of

this satisfaction his righteousness demands that he forgive us our sins--that is nowhere written in the Bible. The saints mentioned in the Bible never relied on it. Indeed not! They knew of a higher and better righteousness of God, not a righteousness which receipted a debt that had been paid to its double amount--an unrighteous person can do that--but a righteousness which canceled everything and even sacrificed the only begotten Son to restore the guilty and lost children and bring them home again."

When John says to the Christians that their sins are forgiven them for the name of Jesus (I John 2:12), he does not mean that "Christ by his merit moves God to forgive the believers their sins. The meaning of the expression, 'for his name's sake,' is explained in those passages in which it is stated that the Christians are persecuted for the name of Christ, etc. That expression does not mean that Christ causes the ungodly to persecute the Christians; it means that they are being persecuted because they believe on him and by that faith have been taken out of the world. Similarly, when it is said that Christians have the forgiveness of sins for the sake of the name of Christ, it means that they have the forgiveness of sins because they believe on Christ and through that faith have come into right relationship with God."

The righteousness of which the Bible speaks is of two kinds: The imputed and the imparted righteousness. Imputed righteousness is the same as forgiveness of sins (Ps. 32:1). God makes a man righteous by taking away his sins. Forgiveness of sin and imputed righteousness are therefore the same thing expressed differently. "The forgiveness of sin is a granting of righteousness, but not in the sense that God considers an unrighteous person as being righteous, but, as we have said, in the sense that all our sins are completely discounted, remitted, wiped out in about the same manner as when a debt is wiped out and the note is canceled or burned. On our part there is no merit or good deed; there is nothing in us which might counterbalance our sin or make good for it; there is no payment of any kind. There is only God's grace and judgment by which he freely and completely wipes out all our sins.

"The term, 'to justify,' may mean either to declare righteous someone who is righteous or to make a sinner righteous by ridding him of his sin. An innocent person who stands before the court is justified by the judge who declares him innocent. If he is guilty, however, the plaintive may justify

him, not by declaring him innocent (that would be a lie, since he is guilty), but by forgiving, wiping out and forgetting his sin, thus making him righteous." In the same manner the forgiveness of sin is "not an apparent but a real righteousness, because through it the sinner is cleared of everything by which he has intentionally or unintentionally sinned against God."

Imparted righteousness "consists in the fact that the sinner becomes different, a new creature, holy and righteous, like unto Christ." Imputed and imparted righteousness are so closely related "that where the one is not found, the other is also lacking. They are like light and heat in fire; they can never be separated."

In agreement with his statement concerning the forgiveness of sin, Waldenstrom states anew that righteousness "is of grace, through redemption in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:23 f.). It is "pure grace and a gift," as Jesus presents it in the parable of the prodigal son. "Redemption in Christ is neither a redemption which once for all is accomplished in Christ, nor is it a redemption which exists in Christ as a treasure in a safety box." It is "the salvation which consists in that Christ from sin redeems each one who is in him."

Man receives God's gift through faith. And through faith man is joined with Christ. "To be made righteous through grace, to be made righteous in Christ, to be made righteous through faith--this is all one and the same thing. To preach righteousness through faith and to preach righteousness through grace are exactly the same, according to Paul" (Rom. 4:16).

"Sin is death, righteousness is life; to be made righteous is to pass from death to life--this is the teaching of the Bible throughout." Just as men through participation in sin become subject to death, so shall they who "receive the abundant grace and gift of righteousness much more enjoy kingly power in life through Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:17).

The Bible speaks of death in three different meanings: spiritual, eternal, and physical death. "In each case death is a consequence of sin, and in the same manner righteousness is redemption from death in all these respects."

Christians are saved from spiritual death. [Even if they have sins "which trouble them, they are not dead in those sins." The fact that the sins

trouble them show that they are living. Dead people are not troubled. Christians in their frailty may be likened unto sick people. "But sick people are living. The dead are never sick."]

They who are redeemed from spiritual death are also redeemed from eternal death. For the latter is "nothing but a continuation and completion" of the former. "Spiritual death is separation from God through sin; eternal death is the same separation continued through eternity. But where the beginning has ceased there is no continuation."

"Salvation from sin also means redemption from physical death." This death is also the wages and consequence of sin; therefore, whenever the power of sin is ended, death is also defeated. "Just as we can be saved from physical disease either by not becoming sick or else by being healed when we are sick, we can also be saved from physical death either by not dying or else by being resurrected after we have died. The former happened to Enoch and Elijah, and it shall happen to all believers who live, when Christ comes. They shall not die, but shall be transformed and caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord, as the apostle says (I Thess, 4:17). The latter shall be the lot of all others--all who have lived and died in the faith.

"To the complete redemption which God has prepared for us in Christ Jesus belongs also our salvation from the devil, who is the prince of the power of the air and who is the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience. 'The course of this world is controlled by the devil.' he is the god of this world and he rules by deceit. He has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, thus deceiving the whole world.

"We cannot liberate ourselves from the imprisonment in which the devil keeps man, because we cannot 'cleanse ourselves from sin.' But Jesus can redeem us. He conquers the strong one and takes from him the weapons on which he relies and breaks the bonds by which the devil has held men captive. These weapons and bonds are deceit and unrighteousness. The Lord takes them away and breaks them by revealing the truth and cleansing man from sin." Against the attack of the devil we have a defense in Jesus, who conquers him and his power.

# RECONCILIATION

The salvation which God in Christ has prepared for the world the Bible sometimes calls redemption; sometimes, reconciliation. "All three expressions--salvation, redemption, reconciliation--refer to the same thing, seen from different points of view." Redemption "presents salvation as a business transaction, similar to the purchase of a slave or a prisoner from the imprisonment in which he is held." The real essence of salvation, however, is seen in the expression, reconciliation. The reason is that salvation consists in man's reconciliation with God.

Waldenstrom begins by pointing out the necessity of reconciliation. "Not only in the Christian religion," he writes, "but also in pagan religions does the need of reconciliation make itself felt. There is a witness within man, a witness which nothing has been able to destroy completely, a witness which declares that it is impossible for man to be happy or attain peace without reconciliation. Even the heathen feel that their happiness depends on a right relationship to God, but they feel also that the present relationship between themselves and God is not the right one; this knowledge causes them to fear their gods. Their hearts also cry out for reconciliation. Their many sacrifices, temple rites, self-abuses, pilgrimages, et cetera, are just so many cries after reconciliation with God. This feeling is no error but deep truth. All thoughts of attaining happiness without reconciliation testify of a dormant conscience or an attempt to deaden it. The Holy Scriptures speak with the greatest emphasis about the necessity of reconciliation. The sole purpose of Christ's coming into the world was reconciliation. All religions--the pagan, the Jewish, the Christian--are characterized by the need of reconciliation. And Christ was not sent by the Father into the world to smother or explain away this need, but to accentuate, sharpen, and satisfy it."

If, therefore, reconciliation is necessary, the question arises how far this necessity extends. "Was it God or man, or probably both, who needed to be reconciled?" Different answers are given. "It is in regard to this question," writes Waldenstrom, "that God's and man's thoughts are as far apart as heaven and earth. As soon as Adam had sinned he got a different conception of God. Instead of turning to God in childlike trust he fled from him in fear and tried to conceal the truth from him. 'The evil

spirit,' as Luther expresses it, 'had taken away the true picture of God; had darkened and erased it from his heart.' The change which had come into the heart of Adam caused him to believe that God also had been changed.

"It is this conception of God which dominates the worship among the heathen. The heathen always imagine God as a dreadful being, and they always see the obstacle to man's happiness in the wrath and cruelty which have come to be associated with God because of man's sin. Their worship is therefore characterized by fear and slavery. With reference to this, Paul writes to the Christians, 'For ye received not the spirit of bondage again unto fear; but ye received the Spirit of adoption' Rom. 8:15). The reconciliation which the heathen conceive is therefore always a reconciliation which; proceeds from man and is aimed at God to appease him. They have only the light of nature to go by, and they therefore judge God according to their own hearts. This wrath in God's heart they attempt to appease by the gifts which they sacrifice to him (gold, silver, animals, men) or by self-torture. For they believe that God's wrath will be appeased by such deeds, and especially by the suffering of the sinner. They know that their own wrath is appeased either by the gifts or by the torture of the one with whom they are angry. They judge God by themselves. Their darkness is that great. All their worship proceeds from the belief that God is angry with them.

"And we are sorry to say that the idea is found not only among the heathen, but that it is so deeply rooted in human nature that it makes itself known even where the Bible is read. Because of this, people have often considered Christ, whom God in Mercy sent to reconcile us to himself, to be the one on whom God has poured out his wrath in order to be able to show us mercy. Indeed, many truly living and lovable children of God see in this the real essence of Christ's work and even fear that Christ shall be entirely unnecessary, if they may not believe that it is so. They believe that they shall never be able to escape the wrath of God, if it has not been poured out on someone else in their stead. To their mind, the greatest importance of Christ is to be for them a protection or shield against God, or to be a lightning rod for his wrath, so to speak, that they may be able to feel safe before him. May God open their eyes more and more! They do not understand how they hurt themselves by thinking less of him than he deserves. God yearns to be known by his children as he



is.

"Against all these wrong conceptions the Bible teaches that there has occurred no change in God's heart toward man because of sin; that it was not, therefore, God who needed to be reconciled to man, but that it was man who needed to be reconciled to God. As a consequence of this, the atonement is a work which proceeds from God and is aimed at man and purposes not to appease God but to cleanse man from sin and restore him to a right relation to God."

God has not changed. With him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. He remains the one he is from eternity to eternity. "Terrible is the damage and destruction which man's sin has caused, but the damage of changing God's heart has not been achieved." God has also shown this "by so loving the world which has fallen into sin that he gave his only begotten Son as a savior." No sin can change God and "cause him to be anything but love. God is love. God has not only been love or become love, but he is love from eternity to eternity, the perfect love. But perfect love can never diminish, for it would not then be perfect any longer. Only that which is imperfect can be increased or diminished.

"Consequently, God's love never needed to be restored by any reconciliation, for it was never lost; it never needed to be increased, for it was never diminished. God loves because he is love, and he remained love in spite of our fall. God's love of the world was not of one kind before the fall and of another kind after the fall, and did not become still another after the death of Christ. A greater degree of love can not be imagined than that revealed when God gives his only begotten Son. But with such affection he loved Cain as well as the Virgin Mary, Judas as well as John, Demas as well as Paul. Just as God lets his sun shine just as brightly on the field of the unrighteous as on that of the righteous; and just as he lets the rain fall with equal bounty on the field of the unrighteous as on the field of the righteous; so has he also given Christ as much for the ungodly as for the godly, and he has not given Christ to reinforce his own love for us, but to lift us from sin and help us acquire true love."

## **IS THE RECONCILIATION OF GOD NECESSARY**

## **FOR THE REVELATION OF HIS GRACE?**

Since Waldenstrom realizes that several objections may be raised against his explanation of reconciliation, his next task is to answer them. "Perhaps someone may say: God must be reconciled not in order to love man but in order to give us his grace. It is true that love remained unchanged, but without a satisfactory reconciliation there was no grace possible for sinners." Against this objection Waldenstrom points out that no such statement is found in the Bible. It is "arrived at from that wrong conception of God [which through the fall has been burnt into our nature]. But that conception cannot be identified or reconciled with the conception the Word of God gives us." Furthermore, we may ask if it was not grace "that God gave his Son for the redemption of sinners." Has any action of love been so undeserved, any deed of God been "so completely an act of grace as just the deed that he has given the world his only begotten Son?" In truth it can be said that "back of all deeds of God stand his love and grace as the ever unshakable foundation, the never exhausted but always surging source from which all his saving deeds issue forth."

## **DOES GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS DEMAND THAT HE BE RECONCILED?**

Another objection is presented as follows: "Even if God's love did not diminish through sin, it nevertheless offended his righteousness, which demands atonement; love is conditioned by righteousness." To this objection Waldenstrom replies: "Nowhere in the Bible is this stated, and in such important matters it is not advisable to teach something which the Bible does not teach. There is not a single passage in the Bible which presents reconciliation as being founded on the supposition that God's righteousness needed vindication. Should someone say that it is implied by the spirit of the Bible that God's righteousness needed vindication, we ask the serious question: How can it be that that which is said to be the spirit of the whole Bible is not written anywhere? No, the spirit of the Bible is what the Bible says. And love and righteousness are never presented

in the Bible as being contradictory to each other, so that the one should limit the other. On the contrary, it is righteous both for God and man to love, to have mercy on and save sinners. It was righteous that God so loved that he gave his only begotten Son as a Savior. Indeed, nothing can be more righteous than such love."

Similarly, it is a higher righteousness to love enemies than to love friends. Both sinners and heathen can do the latter. The former is a righteousness which resembles God's, as Jesus also says.

## **DOES THE "DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE," OF GOD REQUIRE VINDICATION?**

In a third objection the rebuffed opponent seeks a new position. He says, "Indeed, it is most righteous to love and be merciful; and it is true that a person who does not demand satisfaction for himself but sacrifices all to save the one who has sinned against him is more like Christ. But there is in God yet another kind of righteousness, namely, his 'distributive justice,' as theologians call it, the judging and punishing righteousness, and this one demanded vindication." But neither is this written in the Word of God. "The Bible does not know of more than one righteousness of God, although this one expresses itself in many ways. Because God is righteous he loves sinners and sacrifices everything to save them, sends his Son, his Spirit, his Word, etc. To do this is righteous."

It is different in regard to sin. "Because God is righteous he hates all sin and unrighteousness. It is never righteous not to hate sin. He who does not hate sin with all his heart cannot be righteous. No one on earth has loved sinners so wholeheartedly and hated sin so completely as Jesus did, for no one has been in righteousness so perfectly like God as he was. To love sinners is not a different righteousness than to hate sin, it is only a different expression of one and the same righteousness."

"God is righteous both with reference to sin and the sinner." Because of this, "he threatens and punishes those who live in sin, in order that they may come to themselves and be saved. The father who does not punish

his child is no righteous father, and does not have the right love of a father. The government which does not punish criminals is no righteous government, and does not have the right love for its people. To punish in order to harm the one who is being punished is unrighteous, because only the one who is evil can do that which is evil; but God is not evil, for he is love. But it is righteous and kind to punish for the purpose of bringing the sinner to repentance."

Because God is righteous, "he rejoices" over each sinner who repents. Similarly, "Jesus rejoiced over the repentance of sinners but wept over their hard-heartedness, because he was like God in his righteousness." Because of his righteousness God also brings "to eternal bliss with him all those that are righteous, but eternally separates from himself all those who are in such condition that they cannot in their spirit be renewed to repentance and be made righteous."

All these different expressions of God's righteousness "remain the same through all times." To change God's righteousness would be the same as to change God himself. His righteousness is and remains through eternity the same as it has been from eternity. Least of all is Christ come into the world to change it. For he himself is righteous in the same manner as his heavenly father. Indeed, it would be disastrous for us if this quality of God's righteousness were changed in any way. Righteousness is not in contrast to love; it is not a limitation of love or a restraint of love. On the contrary, perfect love is the perfect expression of a perfect righteousness. Look at Christ! There you can learn it, for he is the emanation of God's glory and the true image of his Being.

## **MUST GOD'S WRATH BE APPEASED BY THE DEATH OF CHRIST?**

The fourth objection concerns the wrath of God. Someone may say: "All this may be true, but we must not ignore the wrath of God. The Bible speaks of it in positive terms. The wrath of God had to be appeased by the death of Christ if we were to receive grace."

In reply to this objection Waldenstrom speaks of what he considers to be the teaching of the Bible regarding the wrath of God. He says, "The wrath of God may mean many things."

It may mean "that God hates all sin and unrighteousness." Such wrath can never be appeased or cease.

But the wrath of God may also mean "that God is displeased with all who live in sin and threatens to punish them." This characteristic can never be changed, and remains therefore ever the same even after the death of Christ. Indeed, it has revealed itself after the death of Christ as being more terrible, as for instance in the destruction of Jerusalem. They who live in sin are the children of wrath. Because of sin the wrath of God is poured out over the children of disobedience.

The wrath of God may also mean that God on the Last Day separates from himself those "who have not been renewed to their spirit but have constantly defied God in his effort to save them. This is what the Bible calls the wrath to come." Neither has this wrath been appeased by the death of Jesus. On the contrary, it is he who "shall accomplish and execute the judgment of God's wrath on the ungodly." Because of that, this wrath of God is also called the wrath of the Lamb.

This wrath of God does not exclude his love, because it is not personal. "It is the personal wrath, the personal hatred, which excludes or limits love. This hatred is called personal, because its object is not sin but a person and because it desires to harm the person." That kind of wrath is found in the devil and in men who seek to hurt one another. "Personal wrath is often appeased either by gifts or by revenge. But mark: This wrath of man is not a part of the image of God[ but on the contrary a part of the poison which the serpent at the Fall injected into the heart of man.] There is no such wrath in God, because in him there is nothing which is sinful or devilish. And because of that, you never find in Christ any such wrath, for he is the emanation of God's glory. But if this wrath is not found in God, then it need not be appeased. No, God is love, and love excludes all personal wrath"

The wrath of God abides on the one who does not believe on the Son, as John the Baptist says (John 3:36). but "he who believes on Christ has eternal life and is therefore redeemed from the wrath that abode on him while he lived in sin and unbelief." Waldenstrom adds: "No passage can

be clearer than this statement about the wrath of God, and no passage can show more clearly that the wrath of God is not appeased or quenched, and least of all that it should have been appeased on the day when Christ died. For even after the death of Christ the wrath abides, as the Baptist says, on anyone who does not believe on the Son. But if the wrath abides, it cannot have been appeased. To speak of a wrath which is appeased and yet abides, is the same as to speak of a fire which is extinguished and yet burns."

The believer is redeemed from the wrath which abides on those who live in unbelief, because he has been made righteous through faith in Christ. This justification was not attained when Christ died, but when the individual began to believe in Christ. The believers shall be saved from the wrath to come by the life of Christ (Rom. 5:10); this proves that it was not accomplished by the death of Christ."

## **THE TEACHING OF THE OLD TESTAMENT ABOUT SACRIFICES AND RECONCILIATION**

The fifth objection concerns the teaching in the Bible about the Old Testament sacrifices; it is as follows: But the sacrifices--did not the sacrifices indicate the necessity of God's reconciliation?

The method of reasoning, which brings up this question and which often became apparent during the debate on the atonement, is expressed in this manner: "God's righteousness demanded that sin should be punished. If the sinner himself was to escape the punishment, someone else must suffer in his place. Sin could not be forgiven on any other ground. Christ was to suffer this punishment for the whole world. And on the strength of this future payment God could already in the Old Testament forgive sins; he reminded the people of this reason for his forgiveness by the continuous repetition of the bloody sacrifices."

In opposing these assertions Waldenstrom points out "first and foremost" that it is nowhere stated in the Bible "that God's righteousness demanded that someone must be punished, if sin were to be forgiven. From the first

line in the Bible to the last there is no such statement, and it is not advisable to assert such things without the Word of God." On the contrary, Waldenstrom gives several examples which prove that the opposite is true. God forgave the Ninevites without any punishment. The servant, who owed ten thousand talents, was released from his debt without anyone's paying the debt in his place. Similarly, the two debtors, who are mentioned in Luke, chap. 7, were forgiven without substitute payment of their debt. The Lord forgives without restitution because, as it is written in the book of Ezekiel, he does not desire the death of the ungodly but instead wants him to repent and live. "It is more righteous to forgive for nothing than to forgive for payment, and because of that God is the first and foremost to forgive for nothing, since he is the foremost and highest in righteousness." If God forgave sin in the Old Testament because of the coming payment, then he forgave sin "on credit." But this would discredit both God and his righteousness. Our chief concern, however, should be to be free from our debt regardless of manner or method. "In accordance with our nature, God must be paid to release us; but in accordance with God's nature, sins are forgiven without money and without price. Paid forgiveness is no forgiveness, just as it is no gift to return a note which is paid. And God never speaks in his word about any payment as the ground for the forgiveness of sin."

Furthermore, the Bible never says that it is righteous to punish an innocent person in the place of the guilty. Imagine a father who had a prodigal son that came to him, just as was true of the man that owed ten thousand talents. imagine further his father replying that he could not forgive his guilty son unless he were permitted to punish the innocent son in his place! Do you think he would be a righteous father? Would you say that he acted like God? Indeed not! Even if the innocent brother should offer to suffer punishment in the place of the guilty brother, do you think it would be righteous if the father punished the innocent one? Certainly not. What would we say if civic authorities began to practise that kind of righteousness--punishing the innocent citizens in place of the guilty ones? Would anyone say that it was righteous? If civic authorities reasoned like this: When a crime is committed, justice must be satisfied by suffering; it makes no difference whether the guilty is punished or an innocent person suffers in his place, if only justice is satisfied by seeing punishment meted out; justice is exonerated in either case! Would that be a righteous government? Indeed not. It would be hideous

unrighteousness. And would the same be righteous of God? Never! Let us leave it to the heathen to think that of their gods. But we, who have the light of God's Word, should know that God is righteous and there is no iniquity with the Lord (II Chron. 19:7), and that the righteousness he expects of man is an expression of his own righteousness. And the Bible never says that God has punished Christ in our place. Indeed, the prophet Isaiah calls it heresy when the Jews believed that Christ was punished by God. We, says the prophet, esteemed him stricken, smitten of God, but he was wounded by our transgressions, he was bruised by our iniquities (Isa. 53:4,5).

"Thirdly, the sacrifices in the Old Testament could not express a punishment in place of the sinner. This is evident by the following circumstances. The sacrifices in the Old Testament were of two kinds: bloodless sacrifices--consisting of fruits, etc.; bloody sacrifices--consisting of animals, as lambs, oxen, etc. We realize at once that the sacrifices which were bloodless could not express vicarious suffering. Sheaves of grain, and other fruits of the earth, could not suffer punishment. That interpretation could be applied only to the bloody sacrifices. These were sacrifices which either referred to the reconciliation of the sinners when they had sinned, such as burnt-offering, sin-offering, guilt-offering or such sacrifices which expressed a person's thanksgiving to God for received help. That the latter sacrifices, or thanks-offerings, did not express vicarious suffering is easily understood, for they did not refer to sin but expressed thanksgiving for God's help and mercy. And of this we learn something that is of greatest importance concerning the meaning of the sacrifices, namely, that we may never draw the conclusion that a sacrifice expressed punishment, just because it was bloody. When we conclude that sin- and trespass offerings expressed punishment because they were bloody, our conclusion is not sound, for we must then come to the same conclusion concerning thankofferings, because, they, too, were bloody, as we have seen.

Neither has God said anywhere in his Word that these sacrifices expressed vicarious suffering. "On the contrary, God's regulation concerning these sacrifices is such that it excludes every idea of vicarious suffering. Because, first of all one could not sacrifice for sins which were punishable by death. But if one could sacrifice only for sins



which were not punishable by death, how could then the sacrificed animal suffer death in place of the sinner. His sin was not punishable by death. Furthermore, in case of poverty, the sin-offering could consist of fine flour (Lev. 5:11). But if the sin-offering had expressed punishment, it could not have consisted of flour, for how could an offering of flour have expressed vicarious punishment? It is written in the law concerning an unsolved murder (Deut. 21:1-9) that the people (notice that it is the people) should be atoned through the sacrifice of a heifer. But this could not mean that the heifer suffered death in place of the people, for the people were not guilty of death. It is also evident that the heifer did not suffer death in place of the murderer, because it was not a question of atonement for the murderer but for the people, and in Numbers 35:31 it is expressly forbidden to accept any form of satisfaction for the life of a murderer on the ground that he was guilty of death. If the murderer was caught later on, he was condemned to death; this shows that the sacrificed animal was not regarded as having suffered the punishment in his place."

Fourthly, the ceremony of laying the hands upon the sacrificial animal (Lev. 4:15,24; 16:21) did not signify that the guilt of sin was transferred to the animal. Such laying on of hands occurred also "at the thanksgiving offerings where it was no question of punishment." The laying on of hands is said in Lev., chap. 16, to be an expression of confession of sin. "Besides--and this is the most decisive evidence--at the sacrifice on the day of atonement, the hands were not even laid on the animal which was killed but on the one which remained alive. If the rite of laying on of hands had signified a transferring of the punishment, it would not have been performed on the goat which remained alive."

After Waldenstrom has shown that the sacrifices in the Old Testament did not signify any vicarious suffering, he then explains their significance. Since the debate on the atonement largely revolves around the sacrificial cult of the Old Testament, Waldenstrom's exposition of the sacrifices is of especial interest. We therefore quote his words in extenso:

"We notice first," he writes, "that it is never said in the Old Testament that reconciliation occurred through the death of the animal. No, reconciliation was accomplished through the blood. And this does not mean that blood is a symbolic expression for death, but it means that it is a symbolic expression for life, as the Lord says in Lev., chap. 17: 'The life of the flesh

is in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh atonement by reason of the life.' (Notice: Not through the suffering or death, which its outpouring has caused, but through the life which is in it.) For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and it constitutes its life (vv. 11 ff.). Atonement was not achieved by the outpouring of blood, but by the sprinkling of blood. What did this sprinkling signify? It signified cleansing from sin, as the apostle says (Hebr. 9:22): 'According to the Law, I may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood.' This, therefore, is the symbolism which is expressed by the Old Testament sacrifices. The sinner is reconciled by being purified from sin. This is not a conclusion which we ourselves have come to, but it is something which the Bible itself declares in positive words, as we shall soon see.

"The Hebrew word, which in our Bibles has been translated atone, really means to cover. To atone for sin should then really mean to cover sin, if it could be expressed that way in our language. However, it does not mean merely to hide sin, according to the usage of the word under other circumstances. For instance, when God in Isa. 28:18 says, 'And your covenant with death shall be annulled,' the same Hebrew word is used for annulled as for the atoning for sin. From this we can surmise that when it is used for 'the covering of sin,' it does not merely mean the hiding of sin as under a blanket, but it means the annulling or erasing of sin, as when something written is obliterated. The Lord expresses the same thing when he says, 'I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins' (Isa. 44:22). In God's plan of salvation it is a question of obliterating the sin so completely that it shall be no more, but disappear entirely, as darkness disappears when the sun has risen, or like a cloud which vanishes entirely. Atonement consists in eradicating sin; this is symbolized by the sacrifices. God was going to nullify the entire damage which Satan had done; not throw a blanket over it and let it be, but nullify it completely. Yes, praise be to God! This is a complete gospel, a divine gospel, worthy of God, and for us a blessed gospel.

"But we proceed. Who is it that first of all is set forth as the one who atones for sin? The answer is God. But if God is the one who atones for sin, it cannot mean that he reconciles himself in regard to sin; no, but it means that he himself really annuls sin--exactly as it is written. We read,

for instance, in Ps. 65:3, according to the original text: 'As for our transgressions, thou atonest for them.' And again in Ps. 78:38: 'But he, being merciful, atoned for their iniquity, and destroyed them not.' And again in Ps. 79:9: 'Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name; And deliver us, and atone for our sins, for thy name's sake.' Similarly we read in Ezek. 16:62,63 the following beautiful words: 'And I will establish my covenant with thee; and thou shalt know that I am Jehovah; that thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame, when I have atoned for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord Jehovah.' Let us, therefore, keep this truth --for it is a precious jewel in our knowledge of God. God is the one who atones. Notice carefully: Not the one who is reconciled, but the one who atones for sins--our sins.

"The same truth is also expressed in other words in the Old Testament when it is said that God atones for sinners. To atone for sinners is nothing else than to blot out their sins. We read, for instance, in Deut. 21:8: 'Atone, O Jehovah, or thy people Israel, whom thou hast redeemed.' What does it mean that God should atone for his people? Nothing else but that he should blot out the sins which adhered to the people--that he should sanctify and cleanse his people. Another passage where the same expression appears is II Chron. 30:18 f., where it is said: "Hezekiah had prayed for them, saying: The good Jehovah atone for every one that setteth his heart to seek God, Jehovah, the God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary' (i.e., if he is not clean according to the statutes of Moses). What does it mean that God should atone for those who sought him with all their heart though they were unclean according to the Law of Moses? It means that he would cleanse them from the uncleanness which adhered to them according to the Law of Moses. This is also explained immediately when we read in the following verse: 'And Jehovah hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people.' Listen! Healed, that is, sanctified and cleansed, the people from their uncleanness. We say it again: Let us keep this truth as a precious jewel in our knowledge of God, that God is not a God who demands satisfaction or atonement for himself, but a God who himself atones for sins and sinners; that is, he cleanses sinners by blotting out their sins.

"The same thought is expressed also by the sacrifices of the Old

Testament. By the blood of these sacrifices the priest, as God's vicar, should atone for those who were unclean, or in a symbolical manner cleanse them from their sins. The same thing is also expressed when the priest is said to make atonement for their sins (Lev. 4:26). What a peculiar way of speaking: 'Make atonement for the sins of a sinner!' But oh, how simple it is when I consider the meaning God himself has given to the word 'atone,' to wit, cleanse, or sanctify. To atone for a sinner's sins is therefore the same as to cleanse him from his sin, and this is God's and not man's work. But God did it in a symbolical manner through the priest and the blood of the sacrifices. As it is said in Ezek. 16:63 that God makes atonement for the sinner's sins, so it is also said in Lev. 5:18 that the priest shall make the atonement for the sins of the sinner. It was God's work also when it was done by the priest. When God did it through the priest, he desired to point a prophetic finger to the true priest, God's only begotten Son, who, as God's vicar, was in truth to cleanse sinners from all their sins by his own blood.

"That the meaning of the sacrifices was to cleanse sinners from their sins we find plainly demonstrated by the great sacrifice on the day of atonement, which constitutes the peak of all the sacrifices which were offered for sin. Let us therefore study the description of this sacrifice in Lev., chap. 16 more specifically. First of all, Aaron was to make an atonement for himself and for his house by the blood of a sacrificed bullock and a ram (vv. 5-11), which meant that he was to cleanse himself and his house from sin in order that he might be fit to make atonement for the people. He was then to take two goats, and kill one of them as the people's sin-offering, the other, however, was to be presented alive before the Lord (v. 10). With the blood of the killed goat and the bullock he was to go into the Holy of Holies and sprinkle it on the Mercy Seat. When he returned from the Holy of Holies, he was likewise to sprinkle the blood in the holy place, and especially on the altar. Now notice: for God this is to make an atonement for the holy place, the tabernacle, and the altar! But how does he explain this atonement? Probably in this way, that God was to become gracious toward the holy place, the tabernacle, and the altar? But in verse 16 we read: 'And he (the high priest) shall make atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions, even all their sins.' If we then desire to know what it means to make atonement for the holy place, we read in verse 19 that it means to cleanse it and hallow it from the

uncleanness of the children of Israel. 'But,' someone may say, 'the holy place had no sins from which it needed to be cleansed.' That is true, but the cleansing of the tabernacle was a symbol of the cleansing of the people. It is stated therefore that the holy place and the tabernacle and the altar were to be cleansed from the uncleanness of the children of Israel. In this instance we do not find a word about propitiating God; no, everything is done for the purpose of blotting out sins and cleansing sinners. It is--and we repeat it with joy again--it is God, the eternally faithful Jehovah, the God of Israel, who appears in the sacrifice of the day of atonement as the one who makes the atonement for all the sins of his sinful people.\*

\* In the Old Testament the expression "make atonement for sin" is also used in the meaning of imploring the forgiveness of sin by intercessory prayer. Thus Moses, for instance, says to the people who had worshipped the golden calf: Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto the Lord; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin. And Moses returned unto the Lord and said: Oh, this people have sinned a great sin...Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin--;and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written (Exod. 32:30 ff.). The Apostle James also speaks of a similar "atonement" in 5:14 ff., when he says: Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.--It is therefore something which continues in the Christian church that one in this manner "makes atonement" for the sin of another. But it is apparent that this is something else than when it is said of God that he makes atonement for sin.

"How beautifully and pleasantly has not God presented to us, in this wonderful atonement offering, his own conception of what he called atonement! But in order that we may be still more certain, let us also consider the last part of the act relating to the sacrifice of the atonement, or the treatment of the living goat. This goat was to be presented alive before God and atoned according to v. 10. What does it mean that the goat was to be atoned? Is not this a peculiar expression? It cannot mean that God was to be appeased. No, atone means here as in other places the same as hallow or cleanse. That the goat was to be atoned means therefore that in a symbolical manner it was to be hallowed for the purpose of carrying away the sins of the people. In verse 21 f. it is stated that the sins of the people should be confessed over the living goat, which was then to be led into the desert; on itself it was to carry the uncleanness of the people of Israel into the wilderness. What a striking picture! Let us state it once more: The atonement had this in view, the cleansing of the people by the removing of sin. And God did this through the high priest in a symbolical manner in the sacrifice. Because of that, it is stated as a final explanation of the meaning of the whole great

sacrificial act: On this day shall atonement be made for you, to cleanse you; from all your sins shall ye be clean before Jehovah (v. 30). Listen, and listen to it again: Atonement for you--not for God--that ye may be clean from all your sins--not that God may be appeased from all his wrath. This is God's own explicit explanation, and it ought to be dependable."

This study is summarized by Waldenstrom in the following manner:

1. "The atonement, which was symbolically demonstrated by the sacrifices, was never meant to appease or satisfy God by a vicarious suffering.
2. "In the laws about the sacrifices God was therefore never mentioned as the object of the atonement.
3. "The atonement, which was symbolically demonstrated by the sacrifices, consisted in the removing of sin and the cleansing of the sinner before God.
4. "The sinners or their sins are therefore set forth always as the object of the atonement.
5. "God is presented as the one from whom atonement emanates."

## **PASSAGES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT WHICH SPEAK OF RECONCILIATION (THE ATONEMENT) AS CLEANSING FROM SIN**

The Old Testament considers the atonement primarily as a "cleansing from sin," while the New Testament speaks of the atonement also as an act by which man is placed in a right relation to God. After having completed the examination of the Old Testament passages relating to the atonement, Waldenstrom turns to the New Testament in a similar manner. First he examines the passages which more or less definitely refer to Old

Testament conditions and consider the atonement as a cleansing; then turns to the passages which present the atonement as an act by which man is placed in a right relation to God.

In connection with the passage (John 11:55) about the purification before the Passover celebration, Waldenstrom points out that the meaning of the sacrifices was "to purify and hallow those who in some way were unclean according to the Law of Moses." He then proceeds to examine the different Bible passages which speak of the work of Christ.

In Heb. 2: 17,18 we read thus: "Wherefore it behooved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren, that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation (atone) for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted." The work of Christ as high priest was then "to atone for the sins of the people. The apostle does not say 'atone God' but 'atone for the sins of the people,' just as the Old Testament speaks of the sacrifices. But how should it be done? We can understand it from the Old Testament symbolism. As the high priest in the Old Testament in a symbolic manner atoned through sacrifices (that is, hallowed and cleansed sinners from their sins), so Christ was in reality, as the true high priest and by the sacrifice of himself to purify sinners by his blood from all their sins and present them holy and righteous before God, without blemish or wrinkle. As John says: The blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin (1 John 1:7). But to cleanse means to cleanse, and nothing else. Complete purification from sin--it was this for which the Old Testament high priests groped, with their sacrifices. But they never reached it. The blood of Jesus, on the other hand, truly cleanses from all sins; when his work is consummated at last, a throng shall stand around his throne so great that no one can count it, a throng of men as pure and holy as he himself. And if you ask how they have become so pure, they will answer that they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Notice, notice: They have not appeased God with the blood of Jesus; no, they have washed their robes in the blood of Jesus."

In Heb., chap. 9 the apostle points out the imperfections of the Old Testament sacrifices. They "could not, as touching the conscience, make the worshiper perfect." "But Christ having come a high priest of the good things to come, through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not

made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation, nor yet through the blood of goats and calves, but through his own blood, entered in once for all into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling them that have been defiled, sanctify unto the cleanness of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish unto God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Heb. 9:11-14.). According to the conception of the apostle, did the sacrifice of goats and calves exist to appease God? No, only to "sanctify unto the cleanliness of the flesh." In the New Testament, however, we have "a better sacrifice, the blood of Jesus Christ." What, then, was the meaning of the sacrifices according to our Bible passage? Did the author say: "How much more shall the blood of Christ atone God that he again may be gracious unto us?" No, but he said this: "How much more shall the blood of Christ cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God."

In the twenty-third verse of the above mentioned chapter (Heb. 9:23) we read the following words: "It was necessary therefore that the copies of the things in the heavens should be cleansed with these; that the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these." In both cases the sacrifice concerns cleansing. In verse 26 it is stated that Christ has been manifested in order to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, and in verse 28 that he has been offered to put away (bear) the sins of many. "But to blot out or put away sins means actually to take them away, not to cover them with a sheet so that God may not see them, although they are still there; no, it means to put away sins, to wipe them out, and present the former sinners before God as really holy and purified from all evil. This is the work of God, the work he himself accomplishes in Christ; it is also the spirit of the atonement as pictured in the sacrifices. God cannot be satisfied with anything less, nor can man be saved by anything less."

In Heb. 10:1,2 there is the statement: "For the law having a shadow of the good things to come, not the very image of the things, can never with the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, make perfect them that draw nigh. Else would they not have ceased to be offered? because the worshipers, having been once cleansed, would have had no more consciousness of sins." Waldenstrom asks,



"Consequently, what meaning did the apostle see in the sacrifices?" and answers, "Just the purpose of perfecting or of perfectly cleansing the sinners from sin. But," he continues, "they could not do it. They could symbolize the putting away of sins, but they could not remove them. Because of that, they became in reality more of a yearly remembrance of sin and less a complete removal of sins (v. 3). They could, as we have seen, accomplish a cleanness of the flesh (Heb. 9:13), but a real, spiritual purification or redemption from sin they could not accomplish. For, the apostle adds, 'it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins (v. 4). Notice again: not to appease God, but to take away sins--this was the purpose. Not to throw a covering over the sins and let them remain, but to take them away, was the thought of the atonement which the sacrifices expressed. The apostle continues by quoting the word of Messiah in Psalm 40: 'Lo, I am come (in the roll of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God'; and he adds, 'By which "will" we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all' (v. 10). What did the apostle say again? By what will or whose will? The answer is, God's will. And 'we,' asks the apostle, who are we? The world, possibly? No, he did not write to the worldly but to the believers who had been taken out of the world. And what was it that had happened by that will of God? The answer is: Christ has come into the world and by his sacrifice, which was made for all, he has sanctified those who believe on him. Notice again: that to sanctify sinners, truly to cleanse them from sin--it was this that the oft-repeated Old Testament sacrifices could symbolize but could not accomplish; and it is this that Christ's offering, made once for all, does not symbolize but really accomplishes in all those who believe in him."

In the following verses (11-14) the same thought prevails. Waldenstrom comments on them as follows: "'And every priest indeed standeth day by day ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, the which can never take away sins' (v.11). Notice again what it is about: not to pay God but to take away sins (v.11). And the apostle uses a word which indicates that we are surrounded on all sides by the sins which encircle us as a prison wall. 'But he,' namely Christ, he continues, 'when he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; henceforth expecting till his enemies be made the footstool of his feet' (vv.12,13). It is as though the apostle would say, He does not need to return to repeat his sacrifice, as the Old Testament priests were

compelled to do. 'For,' he continues, 'by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.' Thus once again: perfected, sanctified. The fact that the apostle repeats this so often shows what importance it has. The Old Testament had many sacrifices but could not perfect anyone; the New Testament has only one sacrifice and by that, says the apostle, the Lord has perfected for ever 'them that are sanctified.' The high priest in the old Testament could never say when he had sanctified the people: 'By this sacrifice I have perfected for all time them that are sanctified.' Indeed not; before long the sacrifices had to be repeated. But the sacrifice of Christ and its mighty consequences extend to all ages. All who have been sanctified by it have also been perfected. And what it has done in the past it will also do in the future."

An expression which was much debated during the "atonement battle" in Sweden is found in I John 2:1,2: "These things write I unto you that ye may not sin. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world." Waldenstrom points out that the word which is translated advocate means "sent for" [tillkallad, in Swedish] and is also used about the Holy Spirit (John 14:16,26; 15:26; 16:7). He then says: "It does not say that he has paid the atonement for our sins. No, it does not say that, and we ought not to read as though it did say so. It says that he is the propitiation. Further, it does not say that this or that deed of his is our propitiation. It does not say that his suffering or his death is the propitiation. No, it does not say that, and we ought not to read as though it was written that way. But it does say that he is the propitiation: he himself, in his own person. But what does that mean? Let us see. We can understand it from other similar expressions. In John the Lord says about himself, I am the resurrection and the life. What does that mean? As the divine Savior he is the one who resurrects the dead and makes them living. David says about God often, He is my peace, my salvation, my comfort; that is, he is the one who saves me, gives me peace, and comforts me. Well, it should not then be difficult to understand Christ as the propitiation. he is, as the divine Savior, the person who by his blood 'atones sinners from their sins,' that is, he cleanses and sanctifies them from their sins."

Still another word speaks of atonement for sinners. It is found in I John 4:10 and reads: "herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved

us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Waldenstrom comments on this as follows: "Notice the words again, word for word! The apostle places love first--not ours but God's--even before reconciliation. It is there that everything begins: God is love. Who was it God loved? He loved us, answers the apostle, and by that he means himself and those to whom he wrote. His word in this place must therefore refer to the believers; but that this is also true concerning the world we learn from other passages (cf. John 3:16, 'God so loved the world . . .'). And what did God do because of that love? He sent his Son as a propitiation for our sins (and the sins of the world, I John 2:2). There you see how the apostle presents God, not as one who demands restitution for himself, but as one who sacrifices his Son in order to reconcile (that is, blot out) our sins and repair the damage which we suffered in the fall.

## **PASSAGES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT WHICH SPEAK OF The SINNER'S RECONCILIATION TO GOD**

To those Bible passages which speak of the reconciliation of sinners to God Waldenstrom now turns his attention. The word in the original text on which the discussion hinges "means in reality to place someone in a different, in a right relation to someone else. Just as when reconciliation is expressed with the former word it never says, 'Reconcile God' or 'God's wrath,' so it never says when expressed by the latter word, Reconcile God to sinners, but always, Reconcile sinners to God. This is easy to understand. God had never come into a wrong relation to man and did not need to be brought into a right relation again. Man, on the other hand, had come into a wrong relation to God, and it was necessary that he be brought into the right relationship again. Man's happiness and his salvation from all suffering which the fall had caused depended on his reconciliation to God."

An arm, which has been torn out of its joint and has therefore come into a wrong relation to the body, becomes useless for its task and must suffer. It can be healed only by being replaced in its joint. It is the arm which has

come in a wrong relation to the body; it must be corrected, not the body. "In a similar way, man through sin has come in a wrong relation to God and has become useless in the good for which he was created, coming under the power of death. For man is so created that he cannot be happy without God. In him we live, move and have our being, says the apostle. To be spiritually separated from God through sin is therefore death and unhappiness, a terrible unhappiness. The salvation of the sinner depends on his coming into a right relationship to God. This means reconciliation, a necessary reconciliation, and the reconciliation of which the New Testament speaks, namely, man's reconciliation to God, not God's reconciliation to man."

The evil deeds of an ungodly person "are never independent," but are the expression of an evil mind. "And an evil mind is enmity to God." This attitude of mind must be changed, its sins must be removed, before man can come in a right relation to God. The sinner's reconciliation to God must therefore depend on the atonement of sins," i.e., on the taking away of sins. The sinner comes in a right relation to God by being cleansed from sin.

In II Cor. 5:17-19 the apostle says that any man who is in Christ has become a new creature, the old things are passed away and have become new. "But the apostle adds, All things are of God. This whole blessed change has its origin in him. And how had God done it? The apostle answers, By reconciling us to himself through Christ. Notice! Only by the way of reconciliation had this great happiness come to them i.e., they had become reconciled to God and had come in a right relation to him. And who had accomplished it? Only God, the heavenly Father. And how? Through Jesus Christ. How simple it is! It was not Christ who had reconciled God to them, but it was God who had reconciled them to himself through Christ."

Waldenstrom attempts to clarify the matter by an illustration. Suppose you had a friend who wronged you and thus came into an unfriendly attitude to you. Suppose also that you remained friendly toward him and succeeded in making him friendly toward you again. "It would be wrong then to say that you had become friendly toward him. It was you who had reconciled him to yourself. And whoever said that you had been reconciled and your anger appeased would do you an injustice and talk less worthily of you than you deserve." God's relation to us is similar. We

were enemies to God. But God gave his Son. Through him we have been reconciled to God and have become new creatures. Thus, whoever says that God has been reconciled speaks less worthily of God than what God deserves.

When the apostle says we, he does not mean the whole world; he refers to himself, who had received the word of reconciliation. His reconciliation to God is a work of God, "for it was he who was in Christ, reconciling the world."

God accomplishes his work of reconciliation through Jesus Christ. "The whole of God's saving work is, so to speak, summarized in Christ. Of course, God has revealed himself in other forms also. he has revealed himself in nature; he has also in a special way revealed himself in the prophets, the apostles, etc. But it is never said: God was in nature, or in the prophets, or in the apostles, reconciling the world. No, in Christ--in Christ alone--he alone is the mediator. It was the Spirit of Christ who worked in the prophets (I Pet. 1:11). It was Christ who worked in the apostles. It is Christ who yet today is working through the Word, baptism, communion, etc., to the reconciliation of sinners to God. In him God has summarized everything, in him dwells all the fulness of the godhead, in him God has created everything (Col. 1:16); therefore, in him, and in no one else, is salvation (Acts 4:12). No one can come to God or be reconciled to God but through Christ. It is thus that the Bible speaks in the most positive words."

The whole world is the object of reconciliation. "But the word world does not mean a certain part of humanity, but all men without exception. God does not desire the death of any sinner. He has therefore revealed himself in Christ to reconcile all to himself. He has decided that whosoever believes on the Son shall be saved. On earth God has never had so fierce an enemy that he has not desired his reconciliation."

Waldenstrom emphasizes that in the original text the word is reconciling; not reconciled, as it is translated in some Bibles. God says nowhere in the Bible that the world is reconciled to God. "What I find in the Bible," says Waldenstrom, "is that God's work in Christ was to reconcile the world, that the whole purpose of Christ's advent into the world--his teaching, his suffering, death, resurrection, etc.--was to reconcile the world to God. But that does not mean that the world is already reconciled.

Anyone who says that the purpose of Christ's work was to make the world happy and bring it to heaven speaks correctly. But anyone who concludes from this that the world is now blessed and is in heaven would be wrong. 'But,' you say, 'Christ cried, It is finished, and what was finished if not his work of reconciliation?' The answer is: Everything that Christ according to the prophecies was to do on earth for the salvation and blessedness of the world was finished. We can see from the context that this was the meaning of his exclamation. For it is stated, That the scripture might be accomplished, Jesus said, I thirst. They brought vinegar to his mouth; when he had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished (John 19:28 f.). Thus was everything written about him finished. But this is not to say that the world is reconciled, saved, blessed, etc. No, it is not safe to draw conclusions which lead us beyond the clear statement of the Bible. To say that the world is reconciled is as foreign to the Bible as to say that it is saved. There is not a single passage in the whole Bible where either the one or the other is stated. God desires that the world shall be saved; when God sent his Son into the world, he did it with the purpose that the world should be saved. Christ came, finished his work on earth (John 17:4), suffered and died, and rose in order to save the world, but the world is still unsaved. This we readily understand, but what is true about the salvation of the world is also true about the reconciliation of the world."

Furthermore, the words of the apostle show that the world is not reconciled. For does he not say: "We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God"? "The fact that he beseeches the world to be reconciled to God proves that it is not now reconciled."

But right here many raise an objection, which can be stated as follows: "The apostle speaks of a twofold reconciliation: a general, which is done for the whole world, and an individual, which consists in the acceptance of the general reconciliation by the individual." But this objection is caused by misunderstanding. The Bible never speaks of such a twofold reconciliation. And furthermore, Paul uses the same word in both cases. "For instance, if we say, 'God was in Christ saving the world, we beseech you therefore on behalf of Christ, be ye saved,' it would not refer to a twofold salvation. Everyone would understand that I besought the world to let itself be saved, not on the ground that it was saved, but on the ground that God in Christ has revealed himself for the purpose of saving

it. The situation is the same in our text. When the apostle says, 'God was in Christ reconciling the world... we beseech you on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled (or reconcile yourself) to God,' he speaks of one and the same reconciliation. he beseeches them to reconcile themselves to God on the ground that God is revealed in Christ in order to reconcile them. Scripture does not know of any reconciliation which consists in anything else than that the individual sinner becomes reconciled to God. It was God who was in Christ, and his work in Christ was to reconcile the world to himself. We have become reconciled to him, and of him we have received the word of reconciliation by which we beseech the world: be ye reconciled to God!"

The word the apostle uses indicates that to be reconciled is identical with "being in a right relationship to God." But "the Word of God, as well as all experience, shows that the world is not in a right relationship to God."

The story of the serpent of brass illustrates this for us: "When God through Moses raised the brazen serpent in the desert, it was done for the healing of all who had been bitten by the snakes. But one could not say as soon as the serpent was raised: 'All who have been bitten by the snakes are now healed once for all; let therefore each one accept this healing by looking at the serpent of brass and thus become healed.' No, but it was said this way: 'This serpent is lifted up for the healing of all; we plead therefore on behalf of God, be made whole by looking at the serpent.' In this case it was not a question of a twofold healing. The same is true here, we cannot therefore say, 'In Christ all sinners are once for all reconciled in God; this reconciliation they are now to appropriate each one to himself through faith.' No it is not written that way. It says, 'Christ is of God given as a savior for the whole world; he is dead, buried, risen, etc.--everything and all in order that he should reconcile the world to God; come, therefore, all sinners and be ye reconciled to God by surrendering yourselves to him.'"

In connection with the words in Rom. 5:10 another objection is considered. While we were God's enemies we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son. Does not this prove that we were reconciled to God on the day when Jesus died, thus prior to our birth into this world? In his reply Waldenstrom examines the passage word for word. He writes: "We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (v. 1), we rejoice in hope of the glory of God (v. 2). The love of God has been shed

abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit which was given to us (v. 5). The word we can therefore not refer to the world, which has neither peace with God nor his Spirit. The apostle speaks of himself and the believers, not of the world.

"The phrase, through the death of Jesus, is never the same as the phrase, the day when Jesus died. All they who are now made righteous, living and blessed children of God, have become so through the death of Jesus; but that is not the same as to say that they became this on the day when Jesus died." The expression "through the death of his Son" states "the means but not the time of their reconciliation."

Neither do the words "while we were God's enemies" imply anything like that. They state only that we changed from being God's enemies to become his friends. "It does not say that God became our friend, for he had never been our enemy, but that we, who were his enemies, became reconciled to God. If one who has been a drunkard says, 'God was gracious to me and saved me when I was a drunkard and his enemy,' would that mean that he was regenerated without repentance and before he believed in God, while he was still a drunkard? Surely not. But it would mean that he had been a drunkard but became regenerated at the time and ceased thus to be a drunkard." The same is true here. "Previously we were enemies, and then we became reconciled through his death; now we are not his enemies, but we are reconciled and we are friends; we shall therefore (and much more) be saved by his life. Paul places opposite each other the following phrases: to be an enemy and to be reconciled. He who is an enemy is not reconciled, and he who is reconciled is not an enemy. To be reconciled is therefore the same as to have become a friend after having been an enemy." The argument is concluded thus: "1. All men are by nature God's enemies, because they have a carnal mind. 2. The purpose of God's work of reconciliation is therefore to reconcile enemies to himself. 3. All who have been reconciled have become so after having been enemies."

In Eph. 2:14-16 Paul speaks of how Christ has abolished the enmity between Jews and Gentiles and has made them as Christians one in himself. He did this in order to secure reconciliation to God for both. The means by which it is done is the cross; in other words, "Christ has given his life on the cross both for Jews and Gentiles. It is this great deed of salvation which on the one hand shall 'abolish the enmity' between Jews



and Gentiles and on the other hand reconcile them both to God."

In Col. 1:19-22 the words of the apostle have a much wider application than the above quoted passage. Our reconciliation is grounded, in the last analysis, in God's favor. "It did not please God to deal with us according to our sins, to push us away and destroy us, but it pleased him, on the other hand, to sacrifice everything to reconcile us to him. If the devil contradicts it, if my [own nature] contradicts it and wants to picture God otherwise--what more? The devil is a liar[, and my own nature is heresy.] But the word of the Lord remains for ever.

"In order to reconcile us it pleased God to let not a part but all the riches of grace dwell in Christ. Because of this we find that Christ everywhere in the Gospels gives God the credit for everything he himself says and does. If we seek after the final motive of it all, we find it in God, in the good pleasure of God. God is love--the whole story of our salvation begins there."

According to this Bible passage reconciliation is also a work of God. "God is the reason for it, Christ is the mediator, and the blood is the means." Even the Colossians, who before were lost to God and were his enemies, have now come in a right relation to God and have become his friends, after they have learned to know Jesus and have been joined to him. "According to the teachings of Paul in this passage, a sinner's reconciliation to God consists in that he, after having been an enemy to God, becomes righteous and comes into a right relation of peace to God."

[But "God desires to reconcile to himself not only that which is on the earth, i.e., humanity, but also that which is in the heavens, i.e., the angels." This refers to the holy angels, "for the evil angels are not in the heavens." But the reconciliation of the holy angels cannot mean that "God should appease his own wrath against them." It means what the words say, that "God in Christ was to bring not only humanity but also the heavenly world of angels in a right relation to himself." Men and angels "were originally as one, where the blessedness of one was not possible except in connection with that of the other." They are members of one body. If one member is hurt, it affects the others. The fall of man "affected not only humanity, not only the natural world which surrounded him and was cursed by the fall, but also the heavenly spiritual world." The holy

angels and saved humanity "are reinstated in a right relation to God" through the blotting out of man's sin.]

"But if this is the true meaning of reconciliation, then it is easy to understand why the Bible never speaks of God's reconciliation. Then we also understand why the Bible never says that the world is already reconciled to God. For the world is not already in a right relation to God. The reconciler is given; and in his life and work, his death, resurrection and ascension, and in his assumption of all power in heaven and on earth are the conditions given for the reconciliation of the world. Now the proclamation is made to the world, 'Be ye reconciled to God.' The gospel message of reconciliation does not say, 'God is now reconciled to you, be ye also then reconciled to him.' Neither does it say, 'The whole world is now once for all reconciled to God, accept therefore this reconciliation and be ye reconciled to God.' No, the gospel message of reconciliation says, 'God is love, and he has sent his only begotten Son to reconcile you to himself; therefore, accept him now, the Son, the reconciler, and be ye reconciled to God.'

"But someone will say that in this manner the reconciliation is not accomplished through the death of Christ, as the apostle says, but through faith in Christ. This objection is based on a misunderstanding of terms. If I ask concerning the means that God uses to reconcile the world to himself, the answer is, in the words of the apostle: Christ, the sacrifice of the only begotten Son. On the other hand, if I ask how a person is reconciled to God, the answer is this: In his acceptance of Christ. Here is an illustration. If someone has been sick, but has been cured by the means of some medicine, he may say, 'God healed me through this medicine.' But if I ask him, 'How was it accomplished? In what manner did it happen?' his answer will be: 'In this manner: I took the medicine.' When the children of Israel were bitten by snakes in the desert, God healed them through the serpent of brass. The serpent of brass was therefore the means. But if I ask, 'How were they, who had been bitten, healed by the serpent of brass?' the answer is, 'In this way that they looked at the serpent of brass.' The same is true here. He who accomplishes the reconciliation is God, the heavenly Father; the means are the sacrifice of the only begotten Son; the manner or the way is the faith by which the sinner is joined with the sacrificed Christ and through him cleansed from sin, restored to God and joined to him. According to

the Bible only those who have accepted Christ are reconciled to God. All others are still unreconciled, but they are the object of God's continued work of reconciliation in Christ. For this work is intended for the reconciliation of the whole world."

In Rom. 11:15 Paul speaks of how the rejection by the Jews resulted in the reconciliation of the Gentiles.

Jesus himself has spoken of this in his parables of the great supper (Luke, chap. 14) and of the marriage feast (Matt., chap. 22). When they who were invited, i.e., the Jews, did not accept the invitation, the Gentiles were invited. The same is true of the parable of the vineyard, where Jesus says that the kingdom of God shall be taken away from the Jews and be given to the Gentiles (Matt. 21:43). The rejection by the Jews became the reconciliation of the world in this way, "that by their rejection of the message of salvation it was brought to the Gentiles, and they learned to know Christ, accepting him, and were reconciled to God through him."

We find a similar expression in Rom. 5:11, where the apostle says: "We also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation." Waldenstrom asks, "Who is it, therefore, who, according to the words of the apostle, have received the reconciliation? Is it God? No, we have received it, says the apostle. And from whom? From God, because the apostle rejoices in him. And through whom? Through Christ. But who are meant by the pronoun we? Does it refer to the whole world? No, the apostle does not speak of the world but of the believers and the righteous, as we have seen before. And he says, 'Now we have received the reconciliation.' There is emphasis on the word now. We were enemies before, but now, praise the Lord, we have received the reconciliation. Here is an illustration of it. All who had been bitten by the snakes in the desert were given the brazen serpent as means of healing, but only they were healed who, according to the word of God, looked at the serpent. To the whole world God has given Christ as a reconciler; but the reconciliation to God through him is received only by those who accept him. But to 'receive the reconciliation' is the same as to be reconciled, just as 'to receive health' is the same as to be healed. As long as the sinner forsakes Christ, he remains in his attitude of enmity without reconciliation."

In this connection Waldenstrom refutes the theory of an objective reconciliation. "When people speak of an objective reconciliation which is supposed to consist in this, that the world but not the individual has been reconciled to God, then they speak not only in an unbiblical manner but also contradictorily. Does not the world consist of individuals? If I, therefore, deduct the individuals, what is then the world which is supposed to have been reconciled? Nothing, of course."

Waldenstrom attempts to strengthen his position by analyzing a few Bible passages, which speak of reconciliation between men. "In I Cor. 7:11 the apostle states that if a woman has departed from her husband, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. But what does that mean? Nothing else but that she shall return to her husband and enter into a true married relationship to him. And this must be more of a duty for the woman if her husband has done everything possible to reconcile her to himself. How simple and illuminating that is! We have through sin departed from our true God and husband, and now it is for us to be reconciled to him, to come into a relationship of peace to him; and this so much more since he himself in persistent love has done everything to accomplish such reconciliation."

In Matt. 5:24 reconciliation between brethren is spoken of as a condition for making an offering.

"What does it mean to be reconciled to our brother? Does it mean to appease our brother? Indeed, not. For it may be that our brother does not need to be appeased; it may be that his fraternal love has not been disturbed. But it is necessary just the same for the one who has offended him to go and be reconciled to him. He cannot think and answer the Lord, 'My brother does not need to be reconciled.' No, the Lord did not say, 'Go thy way, and reconcile thy brother'; he said, 'Go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother.' And this injunction remains even if our brother does not need to be reconciled. On the other hand, it may be that our brother is so bitter that he will not be appeased. This would be a continual obstacle to our desire to sacrifice, if our Savior had spoken of appeasing the brother. But no, you need not think this: 'My brother does not want to be reconciled, and because of this I may never offer my gift at the altar.' No, it is not so. The Lord did not say: 'Go thy way and reconcile thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.' He said: 'Go thy way and be reconciled to thy brother,' and that can be done even if your brother is

not willing to be reconciled to you. What the Savior means is here, as everywhere else, just what he says, and nothing else. He says, You, who have sinned against your brother, shall go to him, confess your sin, ask for forgiveness, and thus reconcile yourself to him so that you come into a right relation to him. You are not responsible for his attitude toward you; that is his own responsibility before God."

Waldenstrom considers still another objection before he concludes his exposition of the above Bible passages. We quote his words even in this, since they reveal to us his emphasis on the authority of the Scriptures. "But," someone may say at last, "does not this mean the same as to take out the very heart of the gospel? If the world is not reconciled, what shall I then believe, what shall I then live and die on? We know that many honest and sincerely well meaning souls will ask that question. And our answer is: To hold to that which God says in his word is not to take away the gospel. That which is written is the true doctrine, on which we may safely rest in life and death. Indeed, it is infinitely safer to rest on what God says than on what he does not say. Be bold to rely on his word. But his word does not offer you faith in reconciliation, it offers you faith in a reconciler, a living person, God's Son, to believe on, to have your faith in, to depend on. Believe therefore in him, and you shall be reconciled to God and can live happily and die blessed. Not 'The world is reconciled,' but 'Jesus is mine' shall be your happiness in life and the peace of your heart when you are ready to draw your last breath on earth."

Waldenstrom's doctrine of the atonement is touchingly concluded by the presentation of how God seeks sinners and pleads with them to come to him. In spite of apathy, antagonism, or animosity on the part of man, God never tires of seeking man in order to reconcile him to himself. This is also the charge of missionary work. The apostle speaks of himself (II Cor. 5:20) as God's ambassador, who entreats on behalf of Christ: "be ye reconciled to God."

In this way the presentation of the theory keeps its happy, optimistic tone to the end. God is love. God desires the best for you; come to him, your Father and your redeemer. He is not evil but good, not angry but gracious; he does not need to be reconciled or changed, because he is from eternity love itself. But it is man who needs to be changed by being cleansed from sins and by coming into a right relationship to God.

Small wonder, then, that this generous and happy gospel appealed to the masses, who in the revivals of the nineteenth century sought a way out of both the civic and the spiritual slavery in which they had suffered so long. Those times were spring days, times of joyous experiences among the people, who heard in Waldenstrom's message the gladness of a spring song. If his point of view is not appreciated so much today, it is because springtime and summer are passed and the spirit of the fall and winter has chilled us.

While Waldenstrom's theology is clear and easily understandable, it is also logical and positive. It needs no defense. It speaks for itself. We have noticed how consistently he refers to the Scriptures. The main part of his theology is an exposition of Bible passages. Especially is Waldenstrom anxious not to teach anything which contradicts the Word of God. He builds his theology on the Word of God as far as he can see the truth. His sincerity in this respect can not be doubted.

Happy as the springtime, logically clear, founded on the Bibles--this is Waldenstrom's theology throughout. Let us hope that it will be of benefit for coming generations and may still lead many to reconciliation with God.

THE END.